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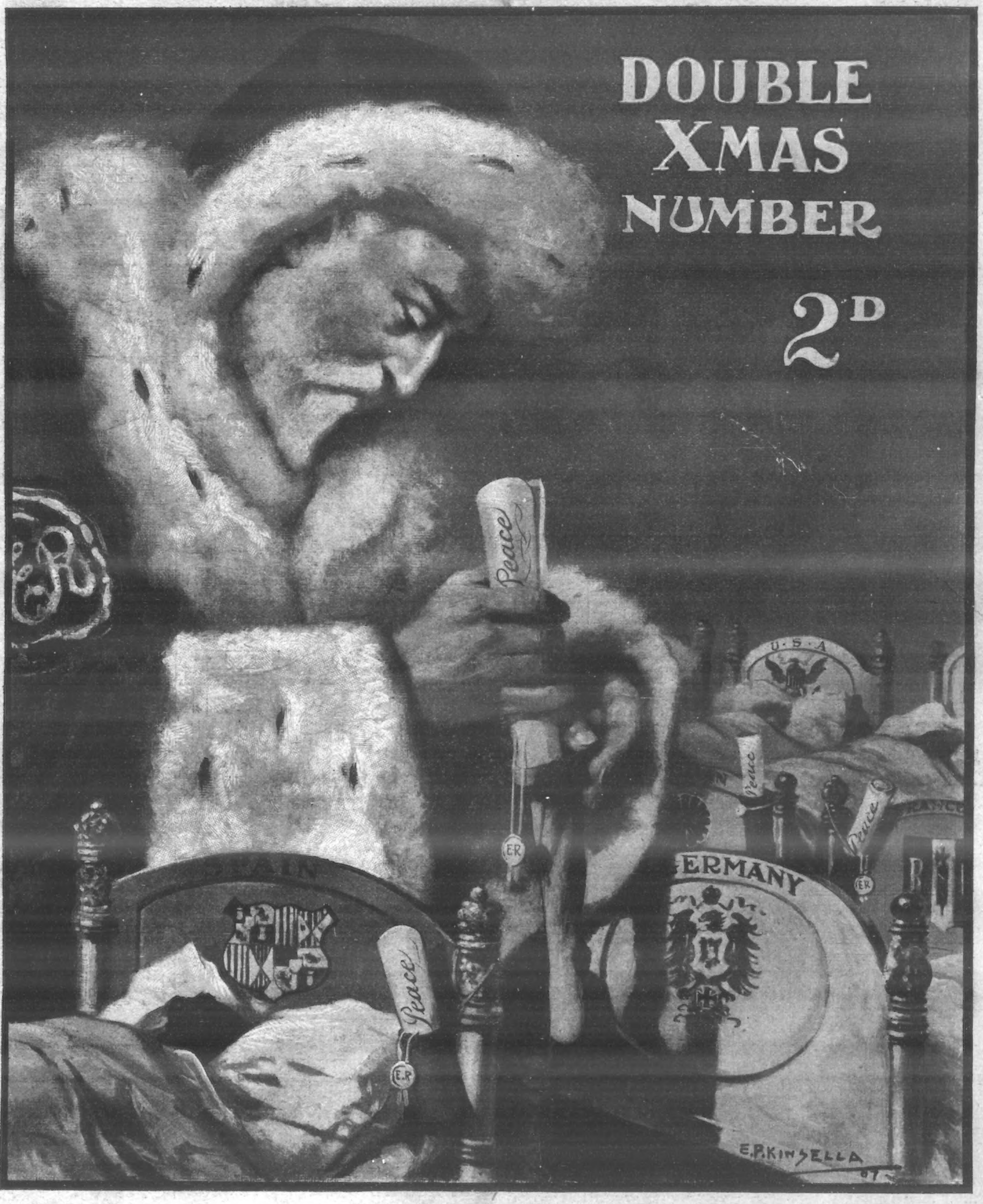

KING EDWARD VII. AS THE REAL SANTA CLAUS.

WHAT PUDDING IS IT TO-DAY?

BE ready at least three days a week with the answer: "A pudding with lots of currants in it." The craving which little folks have for fruits and sweetmeats is a natural one, and should be gratified by supplying them with that most healthful and nourishing of all fruits—dried currants.

Here is a recipe for a nice light pudding just right for the children—

BLACK-CAP PUDDING.

Ingredients: Half a pound of flour, two eggs, three-quarters of a pint of milk, three ounces of currants, a pinch of salt.

Method: Sift the flour into a basin, add the salt, beat up the eggs, and stir gradually into the flour, add the milk by degrees, and work into a batter. Butter a large pudding-basin. Sprinkle in the currants, and pour in the prepared batter. Cover the basin with buttered paper, and steam for one hour.

Your Grocer will give you, free on request, a booklet, entitled "Currants—A Few Tasty Recipes," which is full of useful recipes suitable for the family dinner.

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MOTHER SEIGEL'S SYRUP.
The 2s. 6d. bottle contains three times as much as the 1s. 1½d. size.

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TO MOTHERS
MRS. WINSLOW'S
Soothing Syrup
FOR CHILDREN TEETHING
Has been used over 55 years by millions of mothers for their children while teething with perfect success. It SOOTHES the child, softens the gums, allays all PAIN, cures WIND COLIC, and is the best remedy for DIARRHŒA.
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KEEP THE SKIN SOFT AND SMOOTH ALL THE YEAR ROUND.
Bottles 1s., 2s. 6d. of all Chemists & Stores.
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57 Years' Reputation.
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LET US HAVE A REAL MERRY CHRISTMAS.

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THE EDITOR TO HIS FRIENDS.

CONCERNING CHRISTMAS.

MY DEAR READERS—

AFTER I have dropped a few more precious lumps of coal on the fire, I am going to write you concerning Christmas. You are probably fully aware that it is near at hand—so is quarter-day—but it is nevertheless possible in these rushing times to have overlooked the fact that the time for overeating—I beg pardon, festivity—is close upon us.

No! Please tell the dust-gentleman that I am out.

As I was saying, Christmas is very near; we shall soon have the waits at our door, and, with luck, we may even see snow. Good! In many ways I am not sorry, for there is something about Christmas, an atmosphere that loosens the heart and purse-strings of the naturally mean. There are few Scrooges left now, and there are certainly very few people hard-hearted enough to turn away the small boy with the equally small voice who sings of "merry gentlemen" without giving him something in return for the risk of pneumonia that he is running. True, you may not be merry at that particular moment, but there is always hope.

No! I am not at home to the turncock.

What I really wanted to do was to wish you a very merry Christmas, with everything you want, and a little over to give away to those less fortunately placed. Not that there is anyone so poor that he has nothing to give, and if it is given readily, with a full heart, then the penny of the poor man is worth more in charity than the pound that has to be practically shaken from the rich man. A gift should not be solicited, for then it ceases to be a gift. Often when it appears on printed subscription lists it may be put down as a cheap advertisement.

Which reminds me: should anyone wish to send me game, or even the humble wild rabbit, I shall be here until Christmas. This is not a hint, but merely a statement of fact, and, as I have said, the season for giving is fast drawing near.

No! I cannot see the lamp-lighter.

It really is remarkable the number of people who look forward to Christmas as practically the only time of the year when they have a chance of getting money without working for every farthing of it. Not that I blame them; in fact, I fancy that I am rather envious of them. There must be a blissful excitement in wondering how much you will have to give you a merry Christmas—much more joy than the man who knows that his turkey is a certainty, and that his family will give him expensive presents, can ever have. The man with the presents receives the same kind of thing year by year, and probably does not appreciate them, but the man who is surprised, to whom good things come seldom, has a joy in them when they do come.

No! I am out to everybody.

Christmas has something better than the mere giving of presents, too—it has home life. Year by year, travel is becoming cheaper, and so it is that at every

"I am not at home to anybody."

opportunity the tired worker rushes away to the coast or to the Continent, according to his purse. But at Christmas there is a natural drawing together, a coming home of sons and daughters who may have long since gone out to fight their own battles, a gathering round family fires, in short—a coming home. It is a time of the fatted calf for prodigals and poor relations, and who would grudge them it?

But the best time, perhaps, is for the children. They have their Santa Claus, their wide-eyed wondering as to what the great saint will bring them—and their childhood. Christmas never palls on them, and it is to be hoped that it never will. Thank Heaven there are still plenty of men and women who can become children again at Christmas. "Those beloved of the gods die young" at heart.

No! Tell the coal gentleman that I use gas-fires.

The finest proof of this tendency to keep young at this season of the year is the manner in which the pantomimes flourish. Many children help to pay for the gorgeous productions, but the greater proportion of the audiences are composed of grown-up men and women. They may say that they have only gone to give the children pleasure, but don't you believe them. They go because they like to hear the good old jokes, to look at the pretty girls, and to be infected by the ever-youthful Spirit of Pantomime. They may sneer at the old-fashioned harlequinade, but they wait to see it all the same, even though it does mean crawling home by the last train through the fog.

Don't you be ashamed of wanting to be young. It isn't your fault that the years have gone by so rapidly, but it is your fault if you let your heart grow old. Go and slide if you want to, play kiss-in-the-ring at the children's parties, tug for all you are worth at oranges-and-lemons, for you will be doing yourself and others good. It is the nations of men who grow old before their time who get quickly on to the down-grade. There is quite enough of the strenuous life about, so why not forget it when you can? Anyone can have my part of it.

No! Tell the policeman to call in two weeks' time.

Besides, who can truthfully say that children's games are silly? Some people may regard them in that light, but that is only their idea; and there is nothing in the shape of tangible proof about a theory. Children's amusements, in my mind, are very fine and wise things, for they lift out of the rut of despond, they bring laughter where there has been tears, and so they are very, very good.

So let us all make up our minds to a good old-fashioned Christmas, full of games, and holly, and, mayhap, a sprig of mistletoe with someone underneath it; let us be young as the very youngest of children, let us try and beat them in the matter of laughter; let us all go openly and without excuse to the pantomime, in fact—let us have a real Merry Christmas.

The postman, with a large parcel that looks like cigars? Yes, I am at home. And, here—give him this.

MILLIONAIRE TO MARRY AT EIGHTY-FIVE.

A WASHINGTON telegram announces the engagement of Mr. Henry Gassaway Davis, who in 1904 was the Democratic candidate for the Vice-Presidency, to Miss Maud Ashford, a reporter of society news.

Mr. Davis was, in his young days, a brakeman and afterwards conductor on a railway. He now possesses a fortune of about £6,000,000. He is now in his eighty-fifth year, and Miss Ashford is thirty-five.

CUSTARDS FOR CHRISTMAS.

CUSTARD as an adjunct to stewed fruits, etc., is always in great demand at Christmas time. Bird's Custard Powders now enable housewives to make a delicious dish in a few minutes without any trouble.

MR. WILKIE BARD.

PANTOMIMES IN THE MAKING.

By WILKIE BARD.

WHO NEXT YEAR WILL PLAY THE PRINCIPAL COMEDY PART AT DRURY LANE.

PANTOMIMES are like pâté-de-fois-gras. They go through a most elaborate fattening-up process before they are considered fit for consumption.

The author starts off with a mere skeleton of the goose—this is rather an appropriate metaphor, by the way, because I am playing this Christmas in "Mother Goose" at the Prince of Wales's Theatre, Birmingham—and the producer, or the scenic artist, and the costume designer, and the ballet-master, and goodness only knows who else besides, all come along and have a go at the fattening-up process.

At this stage the comedian generally steps in and finishes off the business, so that on the opening night you have as plump a bird as any man could desire for his Christmas fare.

Thinking out novel ideas for what we call "business"—that is to say, working-out grotesque situations and incidents to keep the fun going all the time, entails a great deal more hard work and really serious thought than many people are aware.

The principal comedian in a big pantomime production is racking his brains all through the summer, in the hopes of evolving some really brilliant flashes of wit with which to make his performance stand out as *the* funniest of the year; and when he has found some good notions he has a long and tedious time before him in which to adapt them to the particular story which the pantomime represents.

I generally get my inspirations for new "business" during rehearsals; but ideas come to me at all sorts of odd times, and in all sorts of queer places. I have had sudden inspirations on 'buses, in trains, whilst "making-up" for a music-hall performance, and even in my bath.

Once I nearly disappointed a Northern audience, who were expecting me to appear on a Monday night, by stopping to jot down an idea which occurred to me whilst rushing for my train at the London terminus on the Sunday evening. On another occasion, I nearly put a premature ending to my existence by attempting to jot down a memorandum on my cuff whilst driving a motor-car.

During the course of my career as a music-hall and pantomime comedian I have met with many strange experiences, mostly, I am glad to say, of a humorous nature. This, perhaps, is partly due to the fact that I was born with the happy knack of seizing upon the funny point of view of anything I see.

Once I was involved in a law-suit with a certain manager, owing to a dispute about a contract. He won, but the damages were not sufficient to cover costs, and eventually we buried the hatchet, and I offered to go down and give a week's free show to square matters. He took the chance, and the date was fixed. The theatre at which we were to appear was usually devoted to drama, and in order to make room for us, the performance of a play previously booked had to be postponed at the last moment.

Bills announcing this play had already been printed, and I expect the manager thought them too expensive to waste, so he utilised them for our show, with rather startling effect. When we got to the town we were astonished to find staring at us from sundry way-bills this announcement:

THE ——— THEATRE.
THIS WEEK.
ROGUES AND VAGABONDS.
WILKIE BARD
AND
NELLIE STRATTON.

Of course, we folks on the stage long ago got used to the description "Rogues and Vagabonds," but it wasn't necessary to revive the wheeze on posters, was it?

I regret to say that, like many greater men, I am not without my critics, some of whom tell me, with a candour which is positively embarrassing, what they think of my performance.

Some years ago when I had made some headway and was getting fairly well known, I was engaged to pay my first visit to a Yorkshire town. The management made quite a splash about it, "He is coming! Who is coming? Wilkie Bard!" ran the announcements in big type. Later came further information to the effect that "He will arrive to-morrow!" and finally, "He has arrived!" It was a great effort in advertising. For a full week prior to my opening, there was only Wilkie Bard and Oxo in the town—so far as the hoardings were concerned. It was about a dead-heat between us.

Whether this raised the hopes of the locals to an unattainable pitch or acted as a damper on my own efforts I can't say. Perhaps the responsibility got me down, but anyway the opening show on the first night was a frost, a dismal frost. I couldn't "raise a gallop," as they say in the sporting classics.

I felt very disconsolate at the interval, and as it was hot and stuffy "behind," I threw on a dressing-gown and went to the stage-door at the back for a breath of air. Presently two youthful Tykes came along the opposite side, and, seeing me, they stopped. Then one of them came across and, eyeing me curiously, said—

"Is thy name Wilkie Bard?"

I had no evidence to the contrary, so I admitted the damaging fact. The gentle youth looked me over again for a moment. Then he said:

'Well, tha't silliest josser aw ivver seed i' mi life.'

With that he passed on his way comforted, and left me to reflect.

I often have amusing experiences with the local amateurs at the towns I visit during my music-hall tours, and also during the run of provincial pantomimes.

Once, when I had introduced some exceptionally effective new business into one of my songs, which necessitated the use of the fire-hose and other stage properties, one of these gentry, who had the run of the theatre, met me in the "wings," and the following dialogue took place—

"I say, Bard," quoth he, "I don't think much of your new songs."

"Really? I *am* distressed," I answered. "Are you particularly interested in my répertoire?"

"Rather!" said the amateur. "Why, I sing all your songs round about here. And, y'know, you pros. have a lot to thank us amateurs for. You get so much on every copy of your songs that is sold, and we are constantly advertising them for you by singing them in various places. You ought to consider us a bit."

"Of course we ought."

"Now, in these new songs of yours, you've introduced a lot of tommy-rot which will make it very awkward for me. How am I going to work in thunder and lightning on a stage about three foot by two? How can I have a fire-hose sprinkling water around the village schoolroom and damaging the vicar's carpets—especially lent for the occasion? It isn't reasonable to expect it."

"It isn't," I agreed. "It really isn't."

"Well, what are you going to do about it?" asked the injured one. "Will you cut out the new songs and go on with the old ones again?"

"I hate to be unsociable," I murmured, "but I'm afraid I can't oblige."

"Then it's no use arguing the matter further," said the amateur comedian with fearful firmness. "I'm sorry, but if you won't be reasonable, I—*I shall have to give over singing your songs!*"

Two years ago I had a very peculiar pantomime experience. I was playing in "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves" at Birmingham. There was a gorgeous scene outside the robbers' cave, with a beautiful waterfall composed of glass an inch and a half thick, which had large pieces of cork stuck on it to imitate rocks, and down which real water ran.

After the usual scene, when Ali Baba loads the panniers of a donkey with gold and leads it over a bridge, I was in the habit of following, with pretended absent-mindedness, not over the bridge, but up the water-fall. On this particular night, one of the pieces of cork on which I stepped, broke away, and I fell heavily to the ground, smashing the glass and cutting my arm very badly.

I rushed into the wings and hastily bound the injured member up in a towel, and hurried on the stage again, fearing that the audience would be anxious about me.

Advancing to the footlights I made a little speech, explaining that I had cut my hand slightly, and promising that it should not occur again, when, to the amusement of everybody, a voice from the gallery exclaimed: "Keep it in, Wilkie; keep it in. It's funny!"

In conclusion, to revert again to "Mother Goose," I should like to ask what the poor old lady has done to have received so little recognition from the pantomime-makers in recent years? During the past eight Christmases, "Cinderella" has been played at no fewer that twenty-eight London theatres, and fifty-seven provincial ones, whilst "Dick Whittington," the "Babes in the Wood," and "Aladdin" have had an almost equally successful innings.

But so far as I know "Mother Goose" has only been played at one London theatre and two provincial ones during the whole of that time. I think, however, that after the production this month at the Prince of Wales's Theatre, Birmingham, pantomime-producers will see what great possibilities for laughter-making the story possesses. At least I hope so.

Wilkie Bard

LET ME SING!

Mr. Wilkie Bard in his famous pantomime song, "Let Me Sing!" which he is still obliged to retain in his répertoire owing to its immense popularity.

WILKIE BARD: DUTCHMAN.

Mr. Wilkie Bard in "My Little Deutscher Girl," one of his latest successes, which everybody is humming.

THE WAITS OF DRY GULCH CAMP.

BY NORMAN M. GODDARD.

CHAPTER I.

THE man cursed as his tired pinto pony stumbled over a heap of rubbish that a careless miner had thrown out on to the track. He cursed feelingly, with a flood of invective which showed that he had been waiting for some opportunity like this to vent his wrath. Then he dropped his heels back into the pony's staring ribs, urged him into a shambling trot, and so went clattering down to where Dry Gulch Camp lay in the hollow. To the man's back and saddle were strapped the long-handled pick and shovel of a miner, a couple of cans, a frying-pan, and a rifle. All these, clattering together as the pony jolted on, served to herald the man's approach.

Yet no one bothered to come out of the shanties of the Gulch to greet Nat Wild. Every day men, disgusted with their claims in the Gulch, struck out for fresh ground, over the hills, and every day one or other of them came back, cursing as Nat Wild was cursing, and even more broke than when they had started out.

The pony stumbled a second time, and staggered to his knees. Wild recovered himself by an effort, the cans rattling like a tin-shop gone mad, but with too much wind knocked out of him to curse any more. He swung stiffly out of the saddle, and swayed slightly as he stood staring down into the Gulch. The sight did not seem to please him, for there was a bitter smile on his lips, which were nearly hidden by his red beard. Certainly there was nothing much to admire about the Gulch: just a single street of shanties with iron or slab roofs, the hub of a great area of broken ground, of piles of débris flung up from the mines, of sluice-ways running from the stream that ambled along the north end, of windlasses that stood guard over the mouths of shafts. Of men, there were none to be seen, for the hour was dusk.

There was a cold wind sweeping down from the hills, straight to where the shanties lay, and Wild moved on sharply, dragging the tired pony after him. In this way they traversed the mile of broken ground that led to the first of the shanties. Fifty yards further on lay the saloon, the biggest building in the row, boasting a verandah, very like a South African stoep in front. Wild headed straight for this building, but stopped short and thrust his hands into the empty pockets of his ragged breeches.

From away on the left came the sound of children's voices, that of a man joining in here and there. It was the schoolmaster—a man who had failed at mining and then turned his attention to the education of the young of the Gulch—teaching the children to sing Christmas carols,

"Peace on Earth!" The words rose shrilly.

"You bet," Wild sneered, and led the pinto round to the back of one of the shanties, and stabled it in the lean-to shed. Then he returned to the street, and stood hesitating. His eyes travelled mostly towards the saloon, but the hands in his pockets warned him that it was no use going there, for his credit was about as hopeless as his search in the hills.

Suddenly a grin crossed the man's lips, and his figure seemed to tighten.

"Bill might be good for a couple o' dollars sure," he muttered. "He 's made his pile—and it ain't like him ter round on an old chum."

"KEATING'S LOZENGES CURE THE WORST COUGH."
Quick Relief—
Sure Relief—
Cheap Relief—
"For this Relief—much thanks."
—*Shakespeare.*
Sold in tins only 1½d. each, everywhere.—[ADVT.]

Wild walked quickly past the saloon, and stopped before a shanty on the left. On his way there he passed nobody, for most of the men were in the saloon, trying hard to forget the disappointments of the day.

Pushing open the rickety door of the shanty, a by no means easy task, for it hung on one hinge, Wild stepped into the single apartment. It was empty.

"Jest my doggoned luck," Wild growled. "Guess if it rained down soup I'd hev a fork."

Certainly Bill Riley was not in his shanty. Perhaps that could hardly be wondered at, for Bill had struck it rich two months back, and was due to go south by the next coach. Already he had blossomed out into a weird cycling suit, procured at much expense from the nearest town, and there were other signs that the lucky miner was not wasting much more of his time at the Gulch.

"Reckon he 's at the saloon," Wild muttered, passing his tongue over his dry lips. "Wall, there ain't hairm in seein' if there 's a drop o' poison somewhar' round here."

Nat Wild slouched across to the cupboard that Riley had built in his spare time, and tugged at the door. To his surprise, he found it locked.

"I call thet durned suspicious," he growled. "'Tain't likely as anyone——" He passed his tongue over his lips again, and knew that he was very thirsty. Then he drew a heavy knife from his belt, slipped the blade in by the cheap lock, and easily forced it back.

The door of the cupboard swung open, and Wild reached out a hand to where the spirits usually stood. There was no bottle there, but in its place lay a canvas bag. It was the kind used for money, and Wild's eyes gleamed as he looked at it. He realised, more fully than he had done before, that Bill Riley had made his pile, that he was one of the few lucky ones who were going home.

Then, in some unaccountable way, Wild remembered that in two days' time it would be Christmas, and he thrust out his fingers and gripped the bag. He swung round swiftly on the heels of his broken boots, as if expecting to find someone standing in the doorway, and darted across the room and closed the door.

Over by the table, Wild untied the string round the mouth of the bag, and made a movement as if to empty the contents on to the table; but when only one gold coin had jingled on to the table he snatched it back, thrust it into the bag, and emptied the contents into the pocket of his coat. He flung the bag back into the cupboard, and moved towards the door.

He stood hesitating, his fingers trembling on the rough, wooden latch, but laughed softly, and passed out into the growing dusk.

"I reckon it ain't much out o' his pile," he muttered; "and I reckon ter need it more than him—sure as Death."

The dusty street of the Gulch was empty enough as Wild emerged into it, yet he hurried round behind the shanties, stealing along in their shadow, reached the very end of them, and stood still. An idea entered his head, and he moved back, still cautiously, to his own shanty. Five minutes later the tired pinto had been saddled and mounted, and Wild rode openly through the Gulch as if he had just arrived from the hills, and reined in before the saloon. On his back he had slung his clattering tools and cans.

Hitching his horse to a hook in the wall of the saloon, Wild pushed the door open and entered. The place was full of miners—drinking, smoking, card-playing. The dim light of the cheap lamps was made hazier by the heavy fumes of smoke.

Wild walked in boldly, but his eyes travelled sharply about the rugged faces in the room, and something very like a look of fear left his eyes as he saw that Bill Riley was not there.

"Thez old poison, bub," Wild said shortly, going straight up to the bar.

The man behind the bar, who was broadly built, and possessed the shoulders of a hitter, yanked a bottle towards him, poured a stiff peg into a glass, and—drank it.

Wild's face flushed hotly, and his right hand dropped to the pocket where he usually carried a gun.

"Oh, simmer—jest simmer, Nat," the bar-tender drawled. "D 'yer think yer kin keep on raisin' this yere firm fer drinks on the bunco lay?"

"Tho't yer might like ter shout es it 's near Christmas," Wild answered coolly.

The bar-tender replaced the bottle on a shelf with a care that seemed to say that nothing but money would bring it down again.

"I guess yer git the drink when Santy Klaws pays right here," he drawled. "Don't reckon this firm gives even him tick."

Wild's hand was in his pocket, his fingers fumbling with the gold coins; and he drew out a five-dollar piece and flung it down on the counter.

"I raise yer!" he snapped.

The bar-tender took the bottle from the shelf, but all the time he was eyeing the coin suspiciously.

"This ain't no cirkis trick, pard?" he queried. "Yer ain't tryin' the gold-brick lay here?"

Wild laughed confidently, his nerve returning to him, and jingled the money in his pocket.

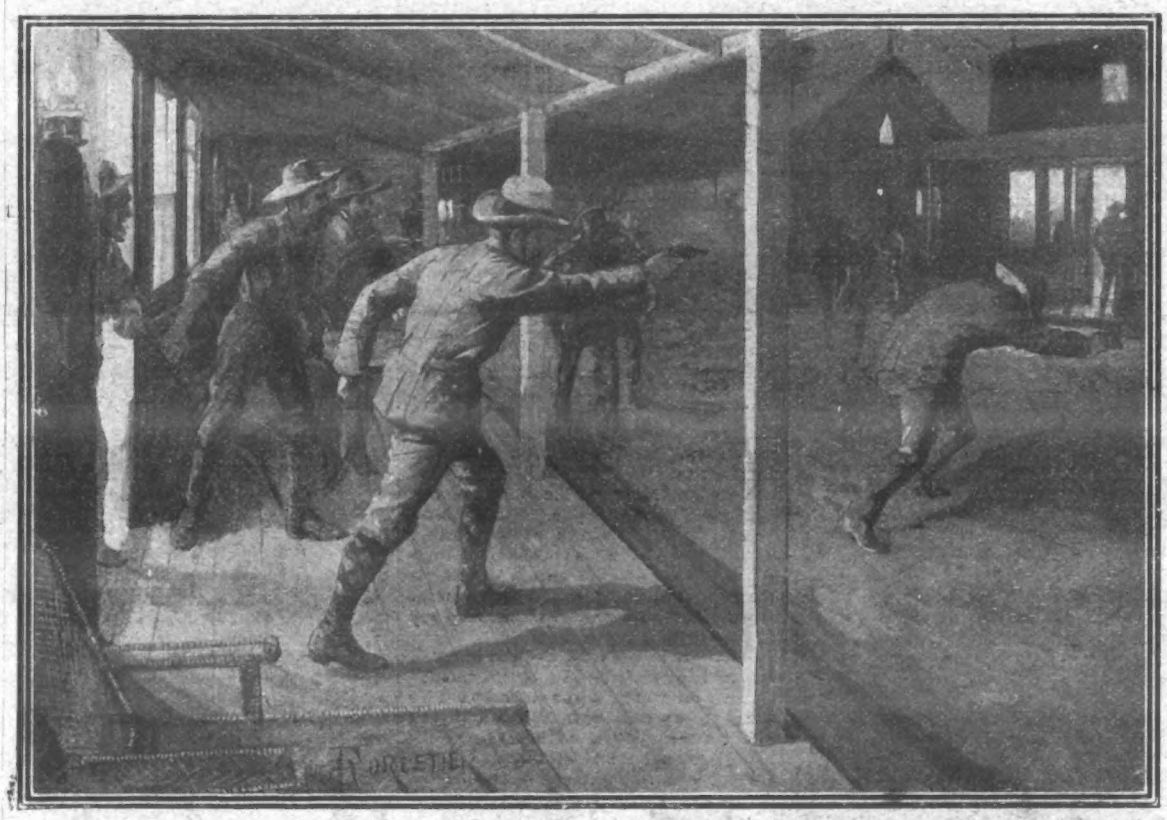
"I calc'late it was 'bout my turn ter strike it," he answered.

The door of the saloon opened, and a sunburnt man, looking self-conscious in a new cycling-suit, very loud check stockings, and a new wideawake hat, came in.

"Bow, boys!" the bartender cried, setting the example. "Here 's the dook in the dud pants!"

Bill Riley coloured under his tan, then laughed with the rest.

"Ease up, Jimmy," he growled. "I ain't smitten with these come-an'-dress-me-fer-a-party clothes. Guys, ain't they? Boys, I leave the Gulch termorrer, an' I 'm shoutin'. Set 'em up, Jimmy!"



Riley fired, and Nat Wild staggered and dropped to his knees.

CHAPTER II.

IF Bill Riley had made a pile, he certainly did not intend to leave the Gulch without spending a part of it, and he would have shouted all the evening had he been allowed to. It was Nat Wild who pushed him aside and stood with his back against the bar. There was a little sneering smile on his lips, from which a large and very rank cigar protruded.

"I guess not," he drawled; "this ain't called Charity Camp while I 'm along. Jest ease up, Bill; I 'm takin' a turn et drivin' this yere team."

It was plain to all in the saloon that Nat Wild, unaccustomed to strong drink for some time, was already feeling the effects of the liquor that Bill Riley had paid for. His face was flushed, there was a suspiciously bright glint in his eyes, and he laughed softly, from time to time, as if enjoying some huge joke. All trace of fear had left him, and he seemed to have forgotten that the money that he was shouting with had been stolen from Riley, from the man who stood within six feet of him.

"Sakes!" the bar-tender ejaculated, "I didn't reckon es how the Gulch could hold two humpin' millionaires et once. Where did yer strike it, Nat? Ain't yer goin' ter let yer pards in on the good thing?"

Nat Wild helped himself liberally to a drink, and winked solemnly at the man.

"I guess not," he answered thickly.

"Bin tryin' yer hand et holdin' up—" the bar-tender began, then dropped behind the bar, for Wild had jerked out a revolver.

"Take thet back, you skunk!" Wild shouted, his red face suddenly gone white; then the gun was jerked from his hand, and Jimmy rose cautiously from behind the bar. There might be a second gun.

"Thet 's a fool game, ain't it?" he snapped. "Cairn't I fire off the playful joke without raisin' trouble?"

Wild laughed harshly, and helped himself from the bottle again. He muttered something about "honour."

Some of the other miners in the saloon had leapt round at the first sign of trouble, but they settled back to their cards again as if nothing had happened.

"Guess we might try a game o' euchre, boys?" Jimmy suggested.

Wild steadied himself against the bar, and jingled the coins in his pocket.

"Thet takes it!" he cried. "Where 's the deck, Jimmy? I reckon I 'll lift Bill's pile offen him afore the mornin', an' this yere one-horse bar, too."

"I reckon," Jimmy sneered, reaching a deck of greasy cards down from the shelf behind him. Then he came from behind the bar, dragged a small table and three stools to an empty spot near the door, and play commenced.

There was no mistake about it, Nat Wild's luck was right in; and it was not long before there was quite a pile of money in front of him. The regularity with which he produced right and left bowers when required became monotonous, and even a change of cards made no difference. Men who had lost all that they had to play for came crowding round, watching the game in silence.

The room became oppressive, and Wild, reaching for a bottle, slung it through the nearest window, letting the cold night air in through the broken pane; and the game went on.

Then the luck changed. Twice Nat Wild lost heavy bets, and he took a long drink before continuing the play. The sweat stood out in little beads on his forehead, and there was the feverish light of the gambler in his eyes. He had forgotten that the money with which he was playing had been stolen, and that the man to whom it really belonged sat before him. He thought nothing of that, but only that he was there to play—and win.

Still the luck held against Wild. He lost his head and played recklessly, until the pile of gold before him melted away like snow under a strong sun.

"Reckon I 'd quit, pard," Bill Riley suggested good-naturedly. He had made his pile, and he didn't want to take this man's money with him on the morrow.

"I guess not!" Wild snarled fiercely, and snatched a handful of coins from his pocket to replace the ones that had passed over to Riley and Jimmy. "I 'm goin' home this Christmas."

Twice more the cards were dealt and played, and twice it was Nat Wild who lost, and only five gold coins lay before him. He suddenly seemed to realise what he had lost, for his fingers gripped the table as if he were losing his hold on things.

"Well, I reckon the lairst five may as well go," he drawled dully.

Bill Riley began to deal, but suddenly he stopped with a card raised from the pack, and his eyes were upon the five coins that still lay before Wild. Then his hand shot out, the cards going flying to the floor, and his fingers snatched up one of the coins.

"Where did yer git thet?" he cried fiercely.

It was all so sudden, so unexpected, that for a moment nothing happened. The miners standing around merely became curiously quiet, while Wild sat back and stared at the accusing face of the man before him. In the excitement of play he had forgotten all about the theft, and that the money that he had been playing with belonged to Riley.

"Where did yer git thet?" the latter cried again.

Memory came back with a snap to Wild, and he sat back sharply in his chair. His jaw dropped a trifle, and he plucked down at his pocket, only to find that his gun was not there.

"I guess"—he stammered—"I guess it 's one o' them I got paid over at La Morte."

"Then you guess wrong!" Riley shouted, springing to his feet. "I 'll tell yer where yer got it. It 's a Spanish coin thet was pairsed on me in the dairk, an' you stole it."

Wild crouched back, his face ghastly white, the sweat on it shining in the light of the lamp.

"You stole it—you cur!" Riley shouted, and his hand went back to his hip.

Wild knew the meaning of that action, and that in mining camps like the Gulch the punishment for robbery is swift and sure as a bullet can make it, and he made his bid for liberty with the instinct that comes to every creature when face to face with seemingly certain death.

With a quick jerk Wild threw the table forward, and it struck Riley on the knees and flung him back. Before he could recover Wild had turned and darted through the doorway.

A quick scamper of heavy boots, and the miners rushed for the door. Bill Riley was out first, and as his eyes focussed a dark figure running straight away he raised his gun and fired.

Nat Wild pitched forward, struggled to his knees, then dropped again.

"Fetch him in!" a big miner cried hoarsely. "He's like es not shammin'."

CHAPTER III.

Nat Wild was not dead, in fact he was very little hurt. Riley's bullet had merely grazed his right temple, stunning him for the moment. The men who went forward to attend to him soon found this, for he staggered to his feet and tried to make a break, nor would he hold still until there were belts round his wrists and ankles.

In this way he was carried back into the saloon, and flung into a corner.

There was no thought of card-playing now, and every miner in the saloon gathered round the prisoner. Their faces were grim and hard, for the miner fights strenuously for the gold that he sweats from the soil, and the man who robs him of it need look for little mercy.

Bill Riley, after seeing the man firmly secured, had hurried off to his shanty, and when he returned the empty canvas bag was in his hand.

"There you air, boys!" he cried fiercely. "Ther's the proof against thet skunk!"

Jimmy the bartender quietly lifted the flap of his bar, bent down behind it, and flung a coil of rope into the centre of the room.

"Thar ain't nothin' like keepin' things handy, bub," he drawled; "jest as thar ain't nothin' like an occasional good hangin' for keepin' a camp moral an' high-toned."

The bound man struggled to his feet at sight of the rope, and his face was a ghastly white. He had lived in mining-camps all his life, and he knew that this was no idle threat. His lips moved quiveringly, but no word would come from them, and he could only stare with pleading eyes at the man he had robbed.

"I guess we ain't doin' this 'cept in style, anyway," a big man of the name of Lefevre broke the silence with, "'Tain't offen the Gulch raises anythin' in the way o' entertainment, so I reckon it ain't losin' this chanct."

It was pretty evident that some of the miners present had played a hand in grim games of this kind before, for a couple of them at once began to make their rough preparations for the trial. They were simple enough, a chair merely being lifted up on to the bar.

"Who's jedge?" Lefevre questioned, then swung round and gripped a little man by the arm. This man was not like the others, though he was dressed in mining garb. He was short, slight almost to the point of being fragile, and his face was curiously clean for an inhabitant of the Gulch. This was James Smalley, the schoolmaster of the Gulch, who had come on to the saloon after finishing rehearsing the children in singing the carols.

The little man's face was white, as white as that of the prisoner, and his nervous fingers fidgeted with his throat as if he, and not Nat Wild, was to die by order of lynch law.

"No—no!" he said in a husky voice. "It 's—murder!"

Lefevre raised a great fist, his eyes glinting angrily, but dropped it again, and laughed grimly.

"I guess yer wouldn't think so if he 'd raised your dough, Mister Schoolmaster," he sneered. "If yer heart ain't strong yer best git outside, fer we 're seein' this through."

A man at the back of the crowd suggested that Lefevre himself should take the chair, and the man mounted to the bar without hesitation. He seated himself comfortably, crossed his legs, and loosened the revolver that hung round by his hip.

"Thar is goin' ter be order in this yere court, boys," he said meaningly. "Spout the case fer the persecution, Bill."

The miners had drawn back against the walls, where they stood silently smoking. Their faces were grim and hard, and there was no mercy in their eyes. Only the schoolmaster, James Smalley, looked pityingly at the prisoner.

Bill Riley stepped forward, and for the moment the absurdity of his dress, the ill-fitting cycling suit, and the loud stockings, were not noticeable. It was only his grim face that one saw, the face of a man who has been shown no mercy, and who will show none in return.

"Jedge," he said in his deep voice, "I reckon I want ter say thet I 'm mighty sorry that this yere cirkis hes happened jest as I am takin' my departure from the Gulch, where I hev always bin treated——"

"You done yer share, too, bub!" a young miner cried, "an' I——"

Lefevre bent forward from his chair, his fingers on the butt of his revolver.

"Order in court!" he growled. "Push right on, Bill."

"I was sayin'," Riley continued, "that this yere—er—accident ain't what I was lookin' for on this night in particular, but I don't reckon es how I kin set down an' stop quiet when some skunk comes round an' robs me."

"Thet 's the ticket, Bill," Lefevre agreed.

Bill Riley held out the empty canvas bag, then handed it up to Lefevre.

"I—" his voice was choked as if the rope were already round his throat—"I took it because I was starvin'." A flush of colour came back to the man's cheeks, and he held his head higher. "Riley 's struck it rich, I ain't, an' I reckoned es how he wouldn't miss it es much es I wanted it."

The man's chin dropped to his breast again, and his whole bearing showed that he knew such a plea for mercy to be hopeless.

Lefevre took the coil of rope from the bar and flung it to a man standing close by.

"Git that rigged," he ordered shortly. "The defence don't hold, an' the court finds the prisoner guilty."

The man who had caught the rope moved forward to obey, but before he could do anything Smalley pushed him aside. A sudden dignity had come to the little man, for the moment disguising his insignificant figure and pale face.

"You shall not!" he cried fiercely. "This man shall not hang!"

Lefevre dropped a hand to his gun, but lifted it again and laughed.

"I guess we 're an impartial court

No one noticed that Smalley had staggered to his feet and slipped from the room.

Ready hands thrust Nat Wild forward, and his bonds kept him from struggling. The noose was slipped over his neck, after the handkerchief had been loosened from it, and half-a-dozen men gripped the other end of the rope.

"Is thar anything yer wantter say?" Lefevre demanded.

Wild passed his tongue over his dry lips, but no word came from him.

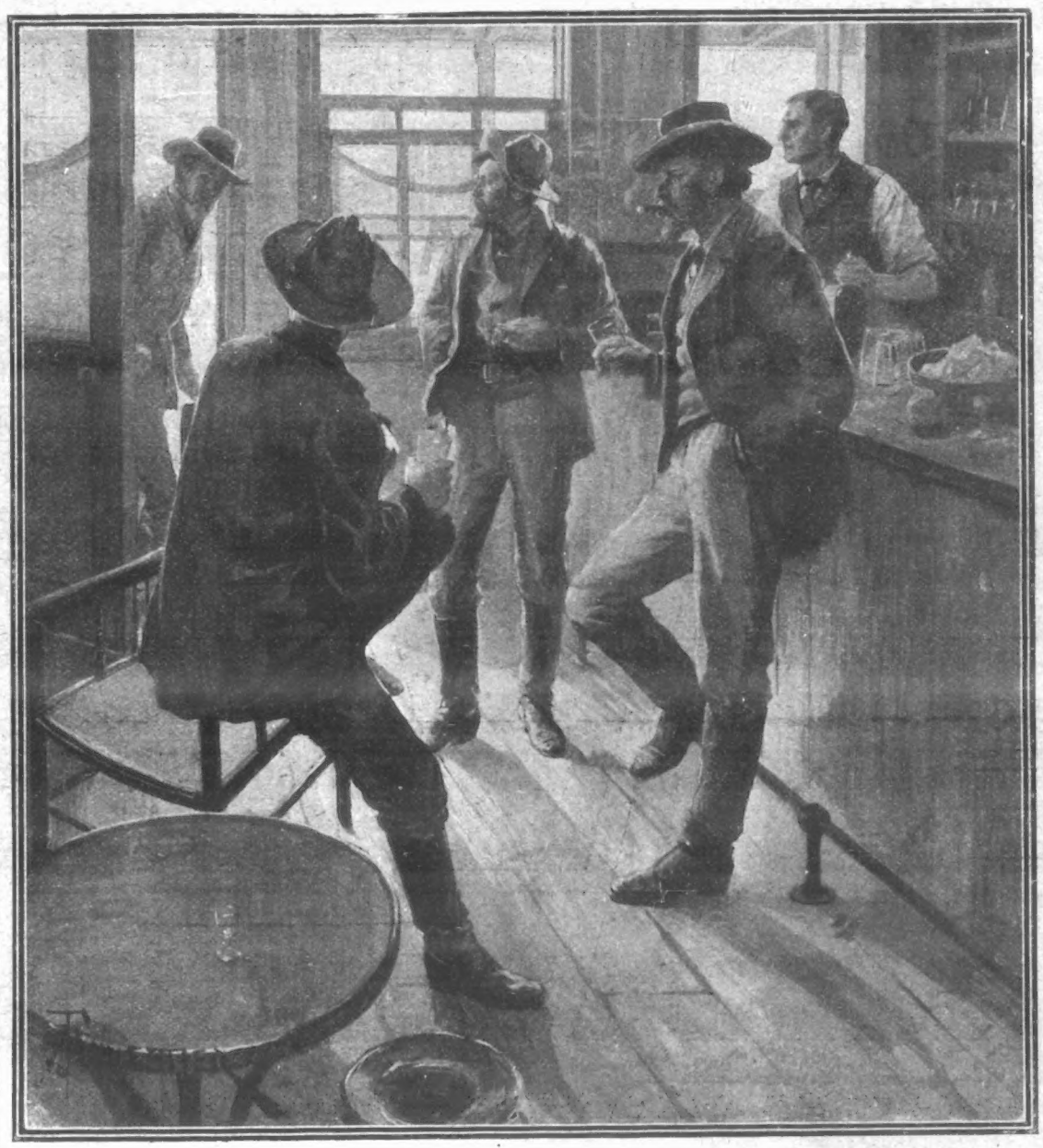
"Air yer ready, boys?" Lefevre cried. Then——

A shrill burst of children's voices broke in upon the man's words, and they were singing outside the door of the saloon—

"Peace on Earth and goodwill to all men."

The words rose triumphantly, and the hands of two of the men in the saloon dropped away from the rope. All eyes were towards the door, but for the moment no one moved.

It was Bill Riley, the man who had been robbed, who broke the stillness. A sharp cry broke from him, and he leapt forward and snatched the noose from round the man's neck. The next moment



Wild leant against the bar, a black cigar between his teeth.

"Thar's the bag the gold was in," he said harshly, "an' I guess it ain't takin' me long ter prove thet the prisoner stole it. Ain't I told yer es how thar was one coin different, an' ain't the prisoner got it?"

"Thet is so, Bill," Lefevre answered, and, picking up the rope, which had been placed on the bar beside him, he examined it judicially, trying its strength with his powerful hands.

"Wal, there ain't no more ter say, fur as I kin see," Riley concluded. "Ain't there proof enough?"

A growl of assent broke from the assembled miners, for the finding of the coin was proof sufficient for them. Besides, Wild had not borne a good name in the Gulch, while Riley had always been known as a white man.

"I guess so," Lefevre agreed too; "but we 're runnin' this yere court on strict Noo York lines, so I reckon es we 'll hear what the prisoner hes got ter say. Speak up, you skunk."

Nat Wild made a mighty effort to pull himself together, but he swayed unsteadily on his feet, and he would have fallen if the wall had not been behind him.

schoolmaster," he drawled, "an' so we 'll let yer speak."

"This man shall not hang!" Smalley cried again, his arms thrown out appealingly. "He spoke the truth when he said that it was sudden temptation that had made a thief of him, and he spoke the truth again when he said that Bill Riley will not miss the money. Would you hang a man for that?" The little schoolmaster looked round appealingly at the stern faces of the miners. "Have you forgotten that it is Christmas in two days? Are you going to have blood on your hands because of this man's sin?"

Lefevre leapt down from the bar, gripped the man by the shoulders, and flung him away, so that he staggered and fell.

"We are," he said fiercely. "We 're goin' ter teach skunks like the prisoner that the Gulch ain't a faro den or a home for thieves."

Lefevre snatched the rope from the man who was holding it, and flung an end of it over one of the beams supporting the roof. Then he made a slip-noose, and stood with it in his hand.

"Any other water-hairted cuss interferin'?" he inquired fiercely; but there was no answer.

he had cut through the belts that held his limbs.

"Quit!" he cried fiercely. "Quit!"

Wild needed no second bidding, but made a break for the door. Lefevre stepped forward to intercept him, but Riley's revolver held him back.

"I guess not!" Riley cried. "I ain't bin no saint, but Christmas is Christmas, boys, an' I guess we 'll drop hangin' till the Noo Year."

The door of the saloon swung open as Nat Wild darted through it, and the lights shone out upon the faces of the children of the Gulch, while a great burst of shrill song came in.

Lefevre suddenly snatched up at the rope, jerked it down, and flung it over the bar.

"Guess the kids needn't see thet," he growled.

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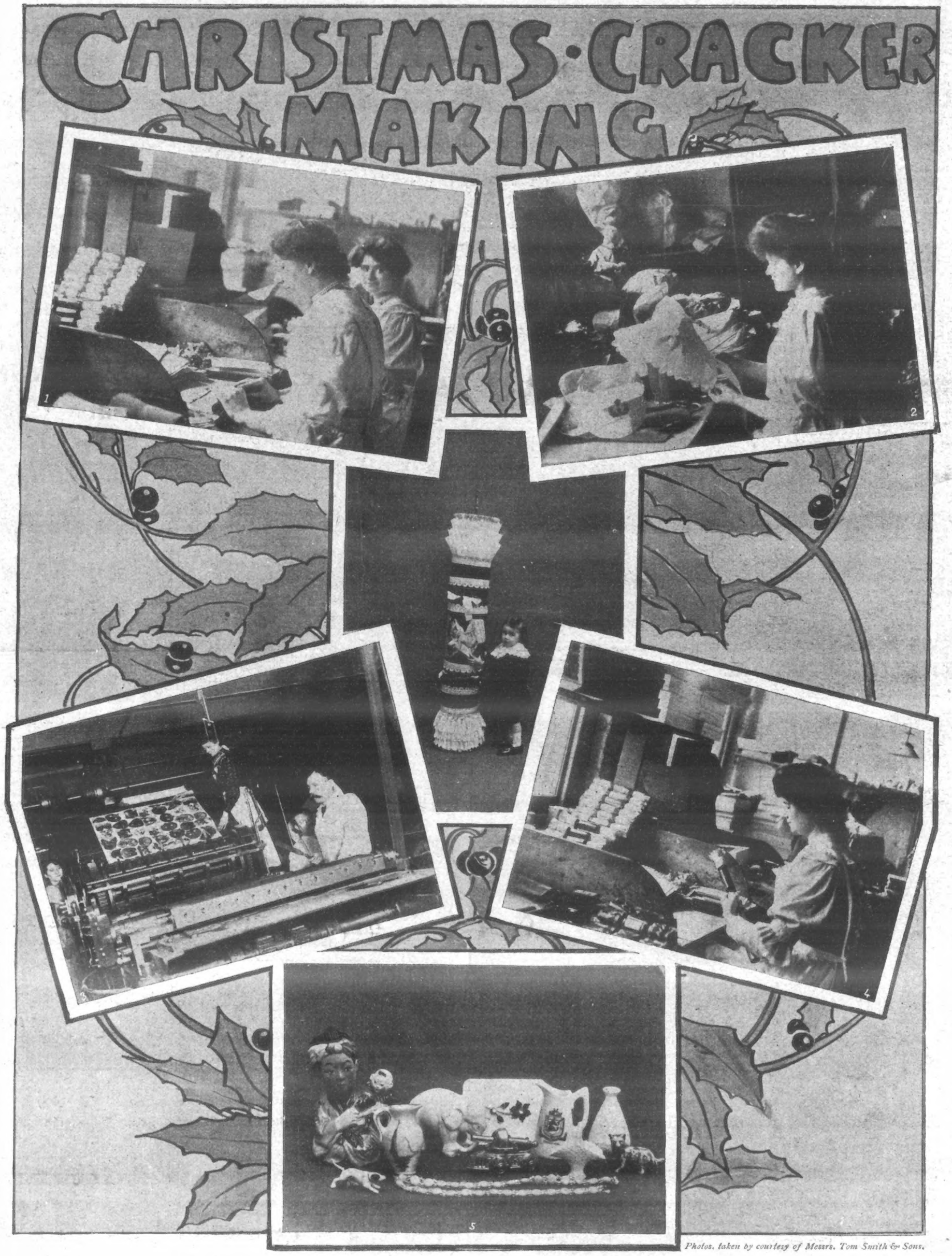

Photos. taken by courtesy of Messrs. Tom Smith & Sons.

The Christmas Cracker plays a large part in the enjoyment of the juvenile readers of "P.I.P." We are, therefore, snowing them how these bon-bons are made. 1.—The paper being rolled round a cylinder and stuck down. 2.—Making the paper caps. 3.—Printing sheets of the funny masks that cause so much amusement. 4.—Putting the finishing touches. 5.—A few of the prizes found in modern crackers.

THE KAISER'S TEA-PARTY IN THE SCHOOL-ROOM, HIGHCLIFFE.

The German Emperor on Saturday entertained 170 little ones who attend Highcliffe School, close by where he is staying. The Kaiser entered enthusiastically into the arrangements, and was heartily cheered by the youngsters when he entered the school-room. To the right is seen the huge sugar cake, which was made by the Kaiser's direction by the chef at Highcliffe Castle.

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MY LIFE IN AUSTRALIA

BY

George H. Druce

(Edited by KENNETH HENDERSON).

PART II.

IT was with rather a heavy heart that I set out in the morning. All through the day I trudged on, until, late in the evening, I arrived at a place which was then named Wyndham. It was only a cluster of huts situated on the bank of the River Werrible, but I determined to look around for shelter through the night. It will be remembered that for some months I earned my living as striker to the smith in a lorry-builder's, so when I caught sight of the glow from a blacksmith's forge I thought that here, at least, I could make myself useful in return for my keep. The smith, whose name I afterwards learnt was Old Ben, at once gave me food and shelter for the night, in return for my promise of assistance in striking throughout the following day. He gave me a little stretcher, which consisted of four stakes driven into the ground, with sacks nailed across. It was a rough couch, but I was too tired to pay much attention to such details. The roof of the hut was made up of a few square pieces of tin nailed in a haphazard fashion to the rafters, and limited my view of the sky above to one of a draughtboard kind. The smith, as will be readily understood, slept elsewhere, so the dog I had brought with me from home was my only companion.

I remained at Wyndham and in the neighbourhood several months, until a man named Hopkins offered me scrub-cutting work in Gippsland, near a district since named Yackendandah. The rough sketch, which I have drawn from memory, of a typical hut in the bush, will give some idea of the wild nature of the country. The work was hard and the pay poor, but the most trying thing of all was the deadly solitude. Those who have never been off the beaten tracks of man cannot realise what an awful strain it is ever to be surrounded by absolute silence. At times one is oppressed with an overwhelming desire to shout, yell, or in some other way to break the awful spell. The evenings we would spend sitting round the fire we had to kindle in order to boil our "billy" of tea; and then we would talk, not because we had much to say, but just for the sake of the sound of each other's voice.

Last week I mentioned that the average Australian's knowledge of bushrangers was limited to that which he had read in books written in England. When writing then I forgot an incident which occurred before we left the Yackendandah, but which is now brought to mind by remembering the evenings I spent with Hopkins when scrub-cutting in Gippsland. When men are thrown together in out-of-the-way places, and are dependent solely upon each other's reminiscences for amusement, talk sooner or later veers round to one's earlier life.

I used to tell Hopkins of my boyhood's days spent on the diggings, and remember how amused he was when I related my first and only bushranger scare, and what a tame ending it had.

It happened when I was about eight years old. My sister and I had been out to visit a Mrs. Roper who used to help us with our lessons. Coming along the track, about a mile from our hut, my sister picked up a paper packet. Except for the fact that it appeared heavy compared with its size, she did not pay much attention to the find. She simply took it home and handed it to my mother, who looked at it, weighed it in her hand, then turned to my father and said, "Gold." Sure enough, when the packet was opened, it was found to contain over twelve ounces of gold dust. My mother then put the packet away, saying, "The parties who have lost this will lose no time in trying to recover it."

Late one evening, some days after, we were all seated in the hut, my mother helping my sister and me with our lessons, my father smoking and gazing moodily into the fire which had been kindled to cook our evening meal. Suddenly my father straightened in his chair, and held up his hand to command silence. The flames from the log-fire cast a red glow over everything, and accentuated the tense look on my father's face as he gazed at my mother. My sister and I strained our ears to catch the sound which had awakened my father from his reverie. Faintly at first, then gradually growing louder and louder, the sound of galloping horses' hoofs beating on the stony soil rang out. My mother murmured "Bushrangers!" and apparently echoed my father's thoughts, for he nodded his head, arose from his seat and moved towards the door. Then he seemed to hesitate, for he turned, took one look at us seated peacefully around the room, shrugged his shoulders, and returned to his seat by the fire.

Again all was quiet within the hut as we listened for the beat of hoofs; but not a sound came from without. For a few brief seconds we held the hope that, after all, it was a false alarm. It was not long before we were undeceived. A series of splashes told us the horses were fording the creek and that our hut was the destination of the riders. There was a jingle of bits as the men dismounted and tethered their horses; then the hut door was thrown open, and two men strode in.

For a few seconds no one spoke, so I had time to take stock of the dramatic scene which the night intrusion of the two strangers created. The room in the hut was about twelve feet square. My father sat in front of the fire, with his face turned towards the door, looking the picture of resignation. On my mother's face, fear and indignation strove for mastery. My sister and I had moved behind my mother's chair, and stood looking over her shoulders in the direction of the intruders. We were too young to appreciate any danger, and were chiefly taken up with the novelty of the situation. The two strangers had closed the door and stood just inside the room, apparently undecided how to act.

When the expected "Bail up!" was not forthcoming, my father roused himself and said, "Well?" By way of answer, one of the men withdrew a bottle of spirits from his pocket and placed it upon the table. The other man, who acted as spokesman throughout, then turned to my father and said—

"We've lost some gold." Immediately our thoughts reverted to my sister's find, which, for the time being, had been forgotten. These men, then, were the owners of the packet—not bushrangers—and they had come to claim it, as my mother had predicted they would. My father was obviously relieved at the unexpected turn which events had taken, but did not for a moment lose his presence of mind.

"How much have you lost?" he asked.

"About thirteen ounces," replied the stranger.

"Done up in a skin pouch?"

"No; rolled up in a piece of newspaper, and tied round with string."

These answers evidently satisfied my father, for he went to the cupboard, and brought out the packet, and handed it to the men, one of whom immediately untied it, and weighed the gold. "Quite correct," said the spokesman, and added, "Who found the dust?" My father pointed to my sister, who stepped forward from behind my mother's chair. The stranger then handed her £5, saying, "You, anyway, shall not lose anything through your honesty."

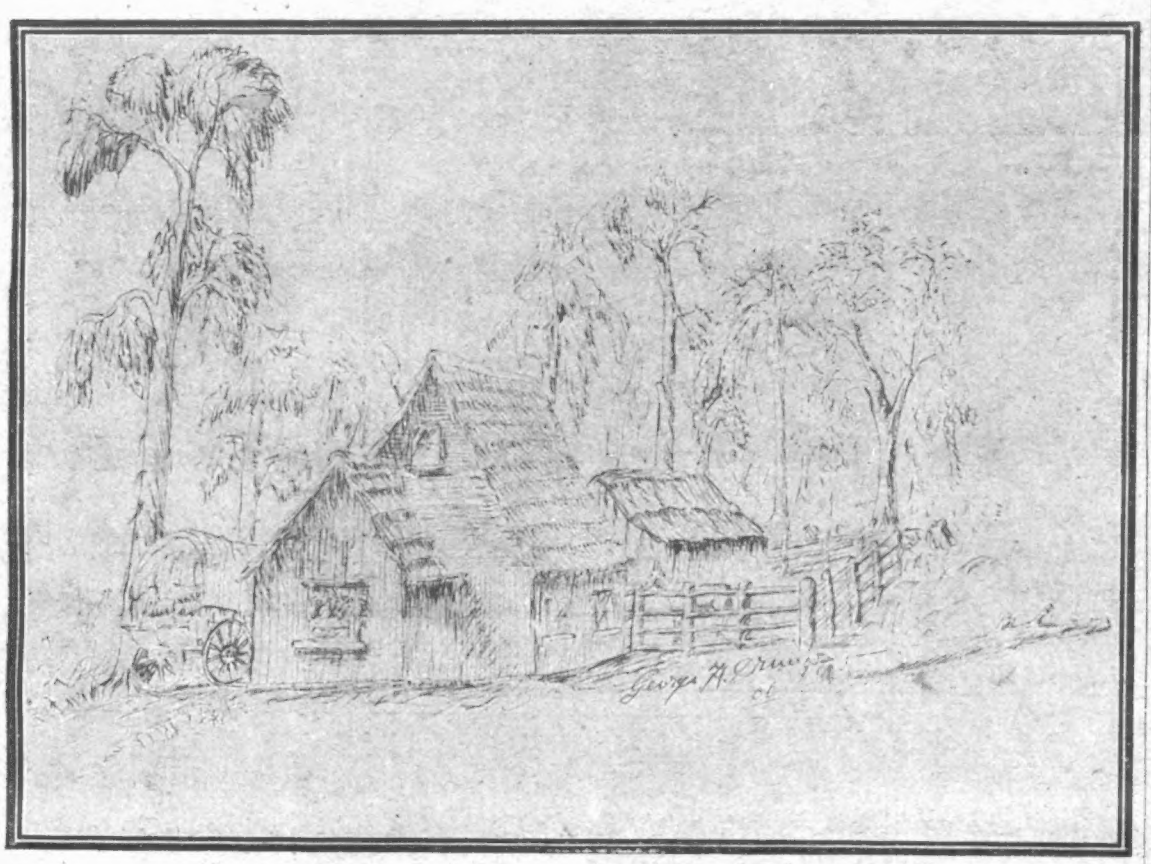
They then motioned my father to drink from the bottle which they had placed upon the table, they afterwards following suit. Then, with a cheery "Good-night" to my mother, they left the hut, mounted their horses, and disappeared into the surrounding darkness.

When I left Gippsland I made my way round to Adelaide, spending a few weeks in various places and at different occupations, sometimes working as a harvester and sometimes as a shepherd. For many months I had a "mate," named Wilson. He was one of the most extraordinary men whom I have ever met. We would work together in silence through the day, and then, when the evening came, he would get a piece of paper and a stump of a pencil and write poetry. I wish now that I could remember some of the verses he wrote. They may have been good, but they did not appeal to me at the time. I amused myself by sketching, but after all these years I cannot draw from memory as I did from life.

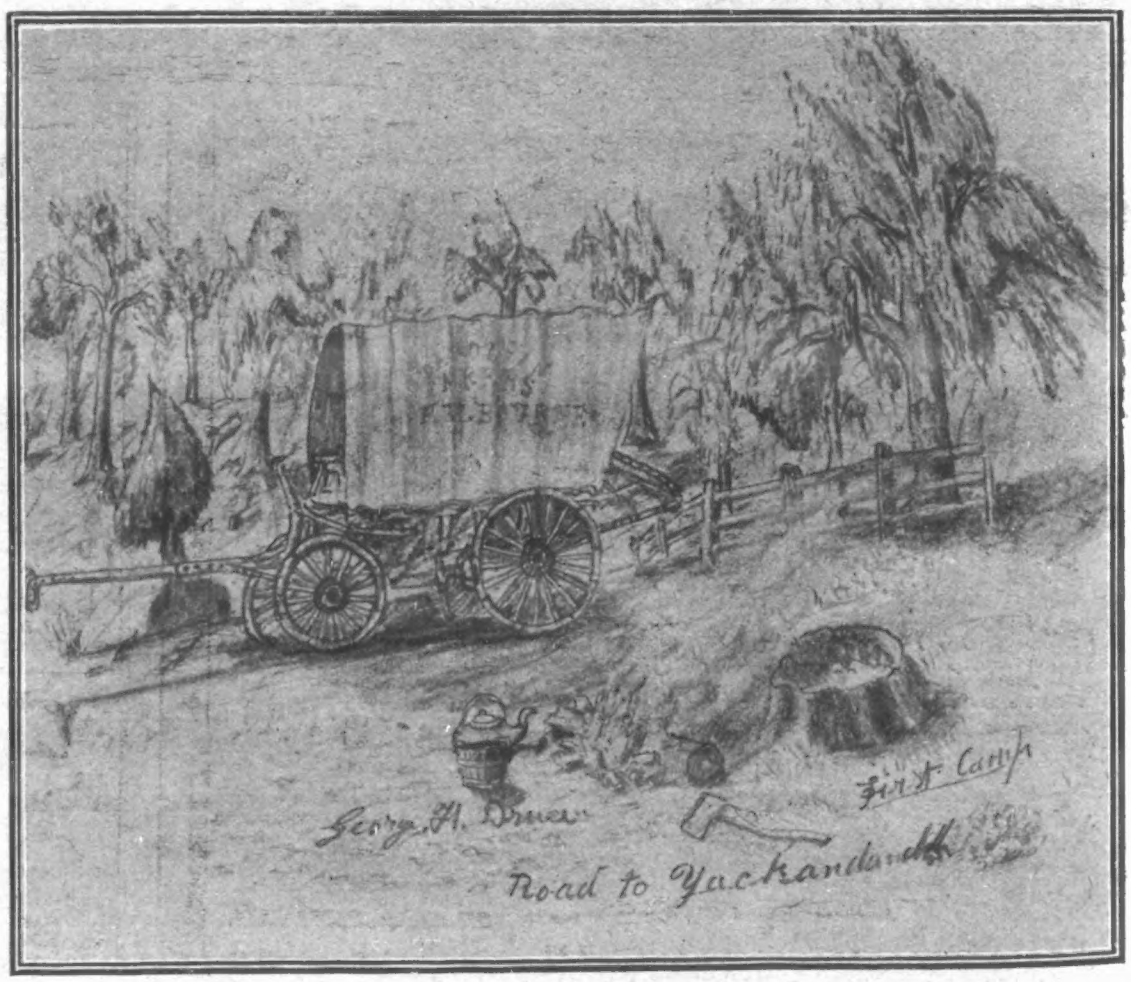
After leading a nomadic life for some considerable time, I again went up to Gippsland, this time to work for a man named Johnny Duncan, and took part in one of the greatest of the bush fires. It is usual in scrub-cutting to lop the limbs of the trees well down to make ready for the summer firing, which takes place before the fall of the year, when the wet weather sets in.

The morning appointed turned out hot, with a strong north wind blowing, so there was every prospect of a big blaze. The fire was kindled by some of Duncan's men in several places away to the north, and down south we had cut a belt to arrest its progress. At once the fire caught a good hold of the dry scrub and came roaring south.

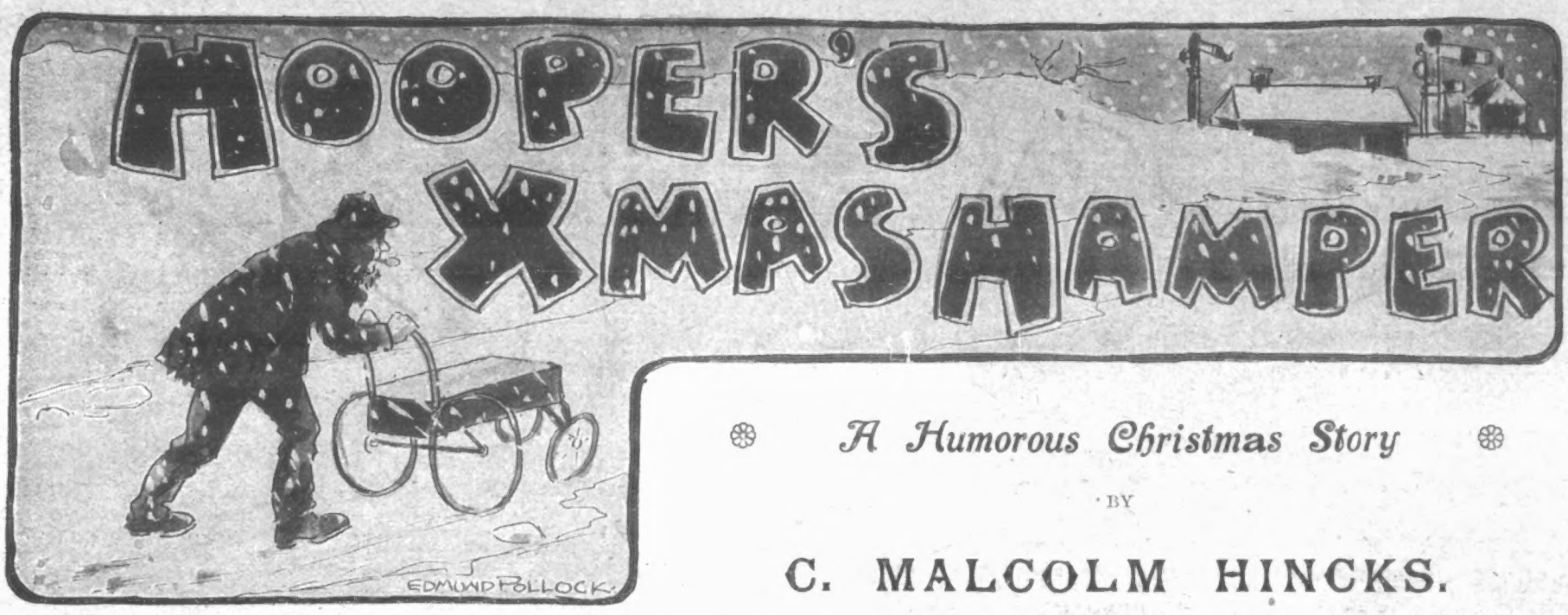
(To be continued.)



A TYPICAL HUT IN THE AUSTRALIAN BUSH DRAWN BY GEORGE H. DRUCE.



A CAMP IN THE BUSH, DRAWN BY GEORGE H. DRUCE.



A Humorous Christmas Story

BY

C. MALCOLM HINCKS.

I.

AT half-past eleven on the morning of Christmas Eve, Mr. William Hooper (known as Old Hooper, to distinguish him from a juvenile nephew of fifty-seven) departed for Littleton Station, a distance of two miles from the little cottage at which he lodged.

Mr. Hooper was clad in an aged suit of corduroys, an old handkerchief was tied closely round his neck, and on his head was a much-worn, round, soft-felt hat. As he trudged along the hard frosty road, he pushed in front of him a box mounted on two perambulator wheels which he had borrowed from his landlady's son, a youth possessed with an inventive turn of mind.

"Old 'Ooper goin' for 'is 'amper," explained a lady who was talking to a new resident, as the old man trudged past the village grocer's.

But he took no notice of anyone; he walked steadily on, smoking his short clay pipe, his eyes fixed ahead, and did not stop until he had reached the station, when he left his barrow outside the small booking office. He had gone through the same performance once a year for ten years and knew exactly what to do.

The ticket window was closed, but Old Hooper went up to it, and in response to a vigorous tattoo it was suddenly thrust open and the fat, red face of the stationmaster appeared in the opening.

"Where's my 'amper?" demanded Mr Hooper shortly.

The stationmaster had just discovered that he was sixpence short on the previous day's receipts, and the fact worried and annoyed him.

"How should I know? I'm not the—"

"Well, you can find out," interrupted Old Hooper calmly.

The stationmaster was about to break forth, when he suddenly remembered that his wife had borrowed sixpence from him the previous evening, and he had advanced the loan from the till. He at once became genial.

"I'll have a look round," he murmured, and Hooper watched him eagerly through the little window as he moved about among the miscellaneous collection of parcels scattered on the floor.

"Hamper, did you say?" he asked, after a lengthy search.

"Yes, 'amper—'amper my gran'darter in Lunnon allus sends me Chris'mas time. Last year there was a—"

"No hamper here," said the stationmaster shortly.

"No 'amper?" repeated the old man dully, "no 'amper?"

"No, nor nothing like one."

"You're wrong," said Old Hooper angrily, "there must be a 'amper. My gran'darter ses it was sent off yesterday mornin'."

He took a crumpled letter from his pocket and held it towards the official triumphantly.

"I can't help that; if your hamper is here come in and find it. You're welcome to look."

Mr Hooper promptly availed himself of the invitation; but after about half an hour's search, during which he carefully examined every label about three times, he had to grudgingly admit that his hamper was not in the booking office.

Just as he finished his search the ginger-haired porter who had been cleaning lamps, came in vigorously wiping his hands on some cotton-waste.

"Seen a hamper, George?" asked the stationmaster vaguely.

"Yes," said the porter, "one put off the ten-twelve this morning. Mr. 'Ouston's groom took it, with another parcel that came for 'im."

"You've give 'im my 'amper," said Old Hooper accusingly, and the porter dropped back a step or two.

"Don't other people 'ave 'ampers besides you?" he asked sarcastically.

"You've give' im my 'amper," repeated the aggrieved old man solemnly.

The stationmaster, somewhat impressed, closely examined his subordinate and elicited that, the label on the hamper in question had been somewhat indistinct, owing to the previous day's rain, but it looked like "Houston, Littleton Station—To be called for."

"You may have made a mistake, George," muttered the stationmaster after an awkward pause.

"'E's give Mr. Houston my 'amper 'E'd better go an' get it," said Mr. Hooper firmly.

"Nonsense, he can't do that; it's Christmas Eve you know, and we shall be busy—very busy day with us. Extra trains, too."

The stationmaster rolled out the last words with pride. Littleton was a small station on the branch line which ran from the Junction at Westfield to the little market town of Merston; it boasted but three trains each way daily, but on Christmas Eve two more were put on for the convenience of villagers wishing to do their shopping in the town.

Mr. Hooper argued solemnly for fully twenty minutes, by the end of which time the stationmaster succeeded in persuading him that the best way out of the difficulty would be for him to go to the Towers, explain the circumstances to Mr. Houston and ask him to allow him to see the hamper.

So, worried and agitated, and still pushing the home-made barrow, Old Hooper retraced his steps along the road he had come, until after about a mile he reached the lodge gates of the Towers. He opened the small side gate and with some difficulty got the barrow through.

"'Ere 'Ooper," said the lodge-keeper, appearing suddenly at his door, "you can't take that up to the 'ouse."

"I've come to fetch a 'amper," explained the old man shortly. "If you don't like me a-takin' the barrer, you'd better come and carry the 'amper."

"What 'amper 'ave you come for?" demanded the lodge-keeper suspiciously.

Mr. Hooper despite his great grievance had no desire to go into the whole matter while standing at the lodge gates. He wanted to obtain his property and get back to his cottage as quickly as possible.

"Mister 'Ouston knows," he said, and without another word pushed on, leaving the lodge-keeper angry but uncertain what to do.

But when Hooper reached the great wide steps leading to the imposing entrance, he received another check. He had no sooner laid the handles of his barrow carefully on the ground and assumed with some difficulty an upright position than the door was flung open and a footman stepped gingerly out.

"Now then, what do you want?"

The old man eyed him disdainfully, and commenced to climb the steps.

"I say what do you want?" repeated the footman pompously.

"What do I want?" repeated Mr. Hooper slowly, getting up three more steps. "I want to see Mister 'Ouston."

"Perhaps 'e has invited you to luncheon," said the footman, waxing sarcastic.

"Perhaps 'e 'as, an' perhaps 'e ain't," said Mr. Hooper, who had edged himself up to the door; "any rate, 'e 's got my 'amper."

"Got your what?"

The interruption came from a man of something between forty and fifty, who had just strolled up the steps unnoticed by the two.

Mr. Hooper at once recognised him as Darrell Houston, the jovial sporting bachelor who had succeeded Squire Dawson at the Towers.

"My 'amper, Sir," explained the old man, doffing his shabby hat. "Stationmaster 'ave made a mistake; leastways, that fool Ginger 'ave. 'E 's give your man the 'amper that my gran'darter in Lunnon 'as sent to me for Chris'mas, an——"

"Did Holt bring a hamper from the station?" interrupted Mr. Houston.

"Yes, Sir," said the footman, feeling uncomfortable, "but it can't be——"

"How the deuce do you know?" said his master, and he waved him aside, beckoning the grinning old man to follow him in. He gave a curt command, and the discomfited footman disappeared and then staggered up into the hall with a large hamper. He put it down with a sigh of relief.

"Lord, but it be a 'eavy one," muttered Mr. Hooper, and he gazed down at it admiringly, while the owner of the Towers examined the label.

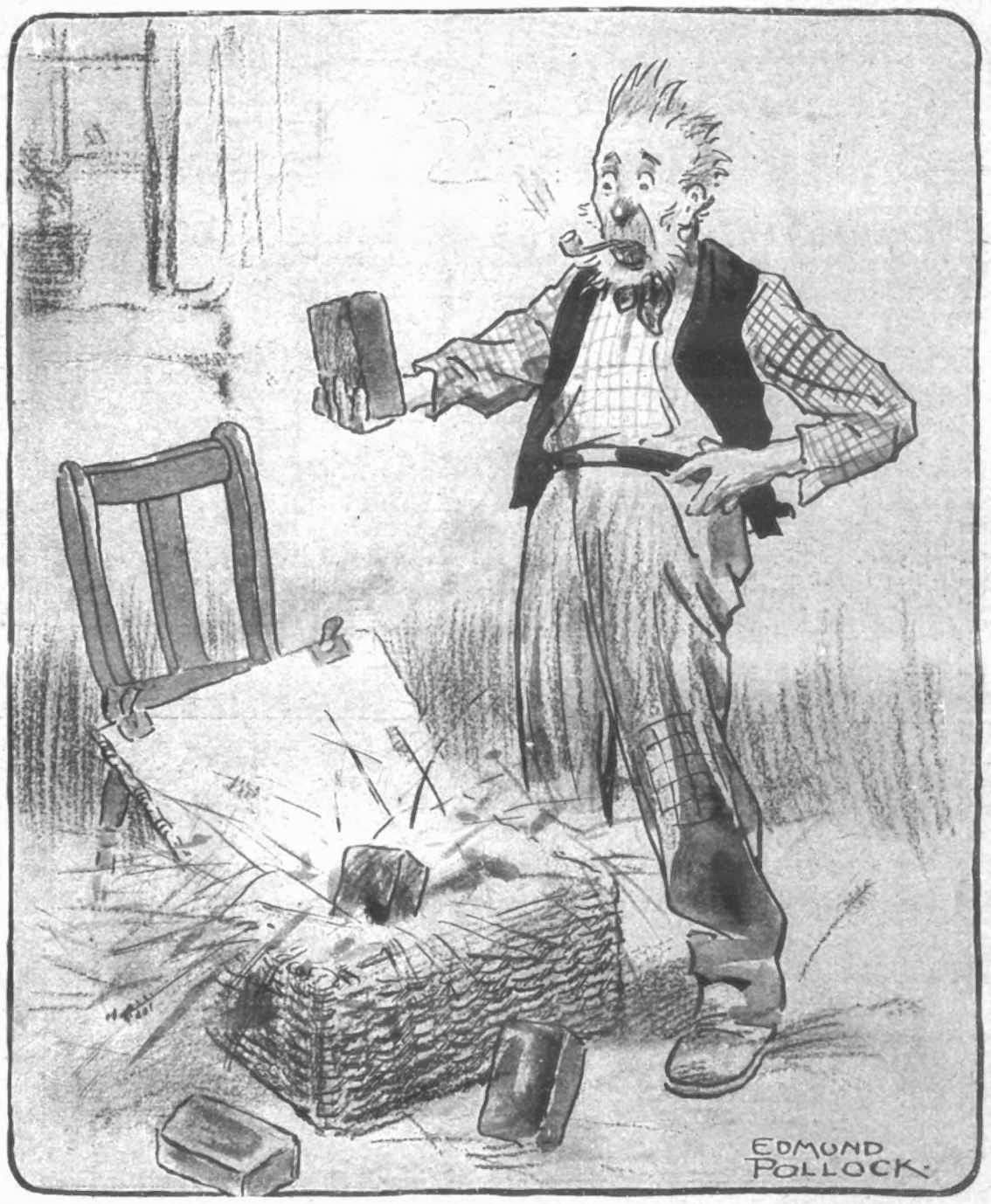
"It 's evidently the one you expect, Hooper," he said kindly. "The label 's got damaged badly by the rain, and there 's only Mr. Ho—— and what lookt like 'Littleton Station' showing; buy I 'm not expecting anything. Sorrs you 've had so much trouble; still, it 't part of the way home for you, isn's it?"

"Yes, Sir," said Mr. Hooper, "an' I've got the barrer."

"Good!" said Mr. Houston cheerfully. "Merry Christmas! James, help the old chap down with it to his motor-car."

He turned on his heel and made his way to the billiard-room, where a party of bachelor guests were making merry.

The disgusted footman obeyed his master's instructions, and a little while later Mr. William Hooper was pushing his heavy hamper in front of him, as he trudged quickly towards his cottage, a feeling of joy at his heart and his fingers itching to undo the hamper that far outrivalled those of previous years.



Mr. Hooper worked feverishly at the straw. . . . Before his astounded eyes were half a score or so of common red bricks.

II.

It was with some difficulty that Mr. Hooper got the hamper into the little

The landlady wished him a Merry Christmas, but he merely grunted.

front room of the cottage. He had declined the proffered services of his landlady's son, fearing it was a base attempt to be in the room when the precious hamper was opened. Once it was safely deposited on the faded red carpet he carefully locked the door, and then, sinking stiffly on his knees, began to cut the strings that fastened he lid.

At last it was free, and Mr. Hooper knelt frowning at the top layer of straw; there was not the usual letter from his granddaughter on top, and the fact annoyed him, as the letter generally took him two or three days to read.

"It ain't like Ann to forget anythin'," he said slowly, as he pulled away at the straw; then he soon found cause for another complaint.

"Lord 'a mercy me," he growled, after a minute or so, "what did the girl want to put so much straw for? I'd sooner 'ave the little 'amper wi' more in it."

There was certainly an abundance of straw; it came out of the hamper in armfuls, and the floor of the little room began to resemble a field at harvest time.

The old man's annoyance turned to fuming curiosity. What on earth could the hamper contain that it should be so carefully packed? He worked away feverishly at the straw, and a moment or so later he knew.

For there before his astounded eyes were half a score or so of common red bricks.

He gazed at them, deprived of action, and speechless for a few moments. How could his granddaughter play such a trick on him? How dare she? He would——

Then he mechanically took them out, counting them as he laid them on the floor—one, two, three——ten; there was another layer, out they came on the floor—eleven, twelve, thirteen—twenty in all, and then on another layer of straw was a half-sheet of notepaper.

He picked it up, and then cast it down in disgust, for in the centre, in printed characters easy enough for even him to read, were the words, "YOU SILLY ASS."

Coming right on top of his keen disappointment, the derision was too much. He staggered to his feet, and, leaning against the door, used words that he had not used for years, his whole body shaking with rage.

Then, as he glared down at the straw, his eye fell on the offending paper, and he noticed that at the bottom of the sheet were some more words he had not noticed before.

He took his glasses from the little round table by the window—the table with the stuffed parrot his eldest son had brought from South America—and, fixing them carefully over his nose, picked up the paper. There were just a few words, written in rather a neat hand; they took the old man some time to spell out, but when he had done so his face lightened considerably.

"Darrell Houston, Esq., with the Owl's compliments."

"It 's silly," he muttered scornfully. "The Owl—a owl would 'ave more sense than to . . . Anyway, it don't belong to me."

He had obtained the hamper by mistake. Clearly it was his duty to restore it to its owner. There was a difficulty in the way, for, after his refusal of his landlady's son's assistance, he did not care to ask for the barrow again. Then it dawned upon him that Mr. Houston would not be likely to want the bricks and straw; if he did, he could send a man for them. He would take back the hamper and explain the circumstances.

He carefully counted the bricks again to make certain there was no mistake; then, taking a stumpy piece of pencil from his waistcoat-pocket, he wrote on the other side of the derisive note: "Twenti briks and a lot o' stror."

This he placed in the hamper, and, making a heap of the bricks in one corner of the room, and a heap of the straw in another, he went out with the hamper on his back, carefully closing the door behind him.

"Hulloa, Gaffer!" said his landlady's husband, meeting him in the passage, "where a-re ye taking yer 'amper to?"

"It ain't mine," said Mr. Hooper stiffly; "It's Mister 'Ouston's. I 'm takin' it to 'im."

"Then where 's yours?" demanded the man.

The question reminded the old man that his hamper had not arrived, and he felt a sinking feeling at his heart.

"That 's my business," he growled.

"Oh, certainly, Gaffer," said the discomfited landlord hastily. "But I was only wonderin'——" Then he added, in conciliatory tones: "We 're goin' to 'ave a reg'lar old-fashioned Chris'mas this year—it 's just commenced to snow again."

"Drat the snow!" muttered Old Hooper; and, with the empty hamper on his back, he went out into the driving flakes.

"'Ow about yer dinner?" shouted the younger man after him. "It 's gone two. The missus thought you were comin' in an hour ago."

"Don't want no grub."

With this laconic answer, Mr. Hooper trudged off quickly towards the Towers, surprised, angry, and disappointed. The flakes of snow that settled continually on his face added to his irritation, and the village postman, who met him half a mile or so along the road and wished him a merry Christmas, marvelled greatly at the depths of profanity to which man can descend.

"Now I 'ope he don't 'ave a merry Chris'mas," muttered the aggrieved postman, as he resumed his way.

The snow was falling heavily when Mr. Hooper strode up the drive leading to the Towers. He had not seen anyone at the lodge, and was congratulating himself on the fact, for he particularly desired to see Mr. Houston personally. Perhaps that gentleman would in his generosity bestow upon him something to enable him to purchase a few delicacies for Christmas, of which the non-arrival of the hamper had deprived him.

But again he was to be disappointed. In answer to his ring at the front door a dignified butler appeared.

"Tradesmen's entrance," he said curtly, and prepared to withdraw.

"I want to see Mr. 'Ouston personal," murmured the snow-covered old man, keeping himself well under control.

"Then you can't, my good man, for he ain't in."

Mr. Hooper's feelings got the better of him. Without a pause he told the whole story of his day's troubles, garnishing it with many strange, but eloquent adjectives, and at last stopped from sheer exhaustion, and glared angrily at the butler, who was verging on laughter.

"I 'll give Mr. Houston the hamper and explain to him," he said after a short silence. "It 's an unfortunate herror, but I think the guv'nor will be amused."

"Amused!" shrieked Mr. Hooper wildly. "Amused!"

He did not trust himself to further speech, but, leaving the hamper on the doorstep, he hurried out into the snow again, his lips moving inarticulately, walking at a wonderfully quick rate for a man of his years.

Ann, after writing to him, had forgotten to send off the hamper, so he would have to be dependent upon his landlady for such additions to his ordinary fare, as she, in her charity, cared to bestow; the thought rankled in his heart; the Christmas hamper had become part of his life, the loss of it, and the excitement and trouble he had been put to, had upset his nerves as well as his temper.

One thing he decided he would not do without—he would have his little drop of port, come what may. With this object in view he hurried forward towards the Green Man, and sighed with relief as he sank into a chair beside the cheery fire in the bar parlour. He was not a very frequent customer, but the landlady knew him well and wished him a Merry Christmas. Mr. Hooper, feeling that with her rested the quantity and quality of the port wine she might give him, merely grunted, and, staring discontentedly into the fire, asked her to put a shillingsworth of port into a bottle and let him have half a pint of ale to drink while he waited for it

Mr. Hooper and the landlady's views differed widely as to what was good value for a shilling, but the former took the small, flask-shaped bottle and slipped it into his coat-pocket with a surly "Thankee."

Then he sat over the fire and wondered what else he could buy to celebrate the morrow. He was deep in thought and the snow was melting in a small pool round him when Clarke, the carrier, came in, white with snow, except for his big, good-humoured face, which was gleaming red.

"'Ulloa' 'Ooper," he cried jovially as he entered the room, "ain't seen your 'amper, I suppose?"

"No, I ain't," said Mr. Hooper in dangerously calm tones, as he half rose from his chair.

"Thought you couldn't 'a' done, or you wouldn't be 'ere. My word, it 's a good weight! I left it at the cottage half an hour since."

"You 've left it at the cottage?" repeated the old man slowly.

"Yes, I was down at the station, an' stationmaster come along with a 'amper that 'ad bin put off the two o'clock.

"'This is Mr. 'Ooper's 'amper that 'e was down about this morning—bigger than any 'e 's 'ad,' says 'e. 'Got 'eld up at the Junction, owin' to fog in Lunnon, and missed the early train.'

"Well, I thought you 'd be wonderin' where it was, so as I 'ad to pass the cottage I put it up in my van an' brought it along for you."

Mr. Hooper wiped his brow. "Are you sure it 's addressed to me?" he asked suspiciously.

"Course it is—H-O-O-P-E-R—'Ooper, Littleton Station; to be called for. I see the fevvers o' some sorter bird stickin' out, an'——"

"'Ave a drink?" said Mr. Hooper, rising. Then, a moment later: "Ere 's a merry Chris'mas."

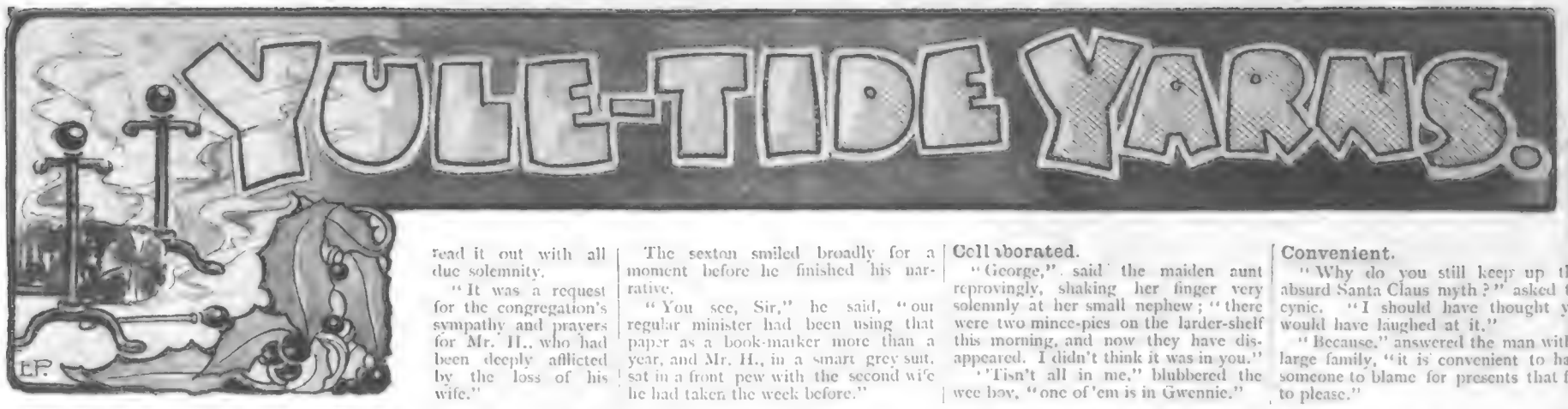
"'Ear, 'ear," murmured the carrier.

So Mr. Hooper went home through the snow to his tea—and to his hamper.

"Where's my hamper?" demanded Mr. Hooper shortly

THOUSANDS OF LIVING CHRISTMAS DINNERS.

A scene on a Norfolk goose-farm. These birds are naturally fattened, and allowed to roam from field to field almost without restriction.



Poor Pa!

Clara (arranging the Christmas presents): "We'll put the pearl necklace for mother here."

Dora: "And Mabel's diamond earrings here."

Cora: "And George's gold watch here."

Dora: "And Edith's diamond bracelets—what shall we do with them?"

Clara: "Lay them on the piano alongside of the Christmas-card for father."

Then the Crackers Cracked.

A merry company were assembled at the Christmas dinner-table, and all enjoyed the feast of good things provided by the genial hostess. One of the guests, in a jocular manner, asked little Tommy, the son of the hostess, where turkeys came from.

"Dunno," he answered, "but I can tell you where this one came from" (pointing to the one on the table). "Ma got it from a tramp for one-and-sixpence, 'cause the man said he stole it. Didn't he, Ma?"

Her Secret.

Wife: "Have you any secrets you keep from me, dearest?"

Husband: "None, darling."

Wife: "Then I am determined I will have none from you either."

Husband: "You have secrets, then?"

Wife: "Only one, and I am resolved to make a clean breast of it."

Husband (hoarsely): "Go on!"

Wife: "For several days I have had a secret—a secret longing for a new dress with hat to match for Christmas."

That fetched him.

At the Finish.

The leader of a small band of carol-singers tells the following seasonable story—

"Late one night, just before last Christmas," he says, "we were joined, in a dark square, by a man who, though he seemed to have been somewhat 'keeping Christmas,' asked to be allowed to 'join in.'

"Remarkably grateful at receiving permission to do so, he sang, if loudly, not at all badly, and when we had finished our round I congratulated him.

"'Yus, guv'nor,' he said, 'and I reckon our collection on Boxing Day ought to be all right!'

"'Our collection!' I explained to him that we were amateurs attached to the local institute, and singing merely for the love of the thing.

"'Wha-at?' exclaimed the man, seemingly dumfounded. 'Why, I thought we was the waits!'"

His Last Call.

The shades of the goose and turkey were discussing the circumstances which had attended their respective deaths.

"Did you offer any objection when first the cruel farmer laid hands on you?" sympathetically inquired the gobbler.

"Yes," replied his gooseship; "I cried out, 'Hullo! what 's this?'"

"What did you say next?" inquired the now thoroughly interested turkey, as the other paused for a moment.

"Oh," the goose replied, "I did not say anything more just then; I was wrung off."

Unfortunate.

"Yes," said the sexton, as he was showing the visitors round the church last Christmas-time. "We had an amusing experience here only a few weeks ago.

"Our regular minister was away and a stranger filled his pulpit. During the service, finding a written notice tucked in the Bible on the reading desk, he read it out with all due solemnity.

"It was a request for the congregation's sympathy and prayers for Mr. H., who had been deeply afflicted by the loss of his wife."

The sexton smiled broadly for a moment before he finished his narrative.

"You see, Sir," he said, "our regular minister had been using that paper as a book-marker more than a year, and Mr. H., in a smart grey suit, sat in a front pew with the second wife he had taken the week before."

Collaborated.

"George," said the maiden aunt reprovingly, shaking her finger very solemnly at her small nephew; "there were two mince-pies on the larder-shelf this morning, and now they have disappeared. I didn't think it was in you."

"'Tisn't all in me," blubbered the wee boy, "one of 'em is in Gwennie."

Convenient.

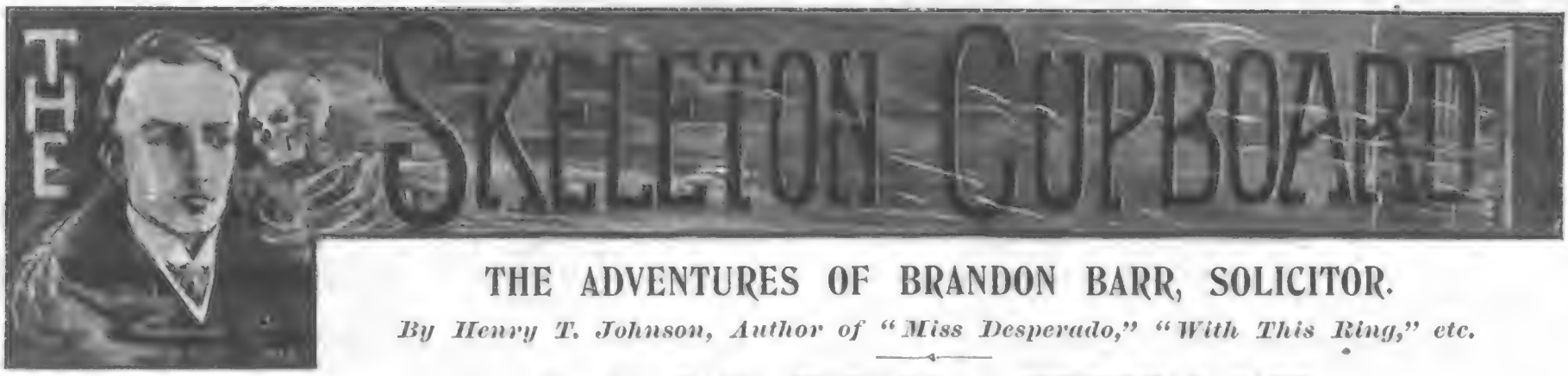
"Why do you still keep up that absurd Santa Claus myth?" asked the cynic. "I should have thought you would have laughed at it."

"Because," answered the man with a large family, "it is convenient to have someone to blame for presents that fail to please."

MRS. MIGGS: Tommy! Tom—my! Come at once.
TOMMY: Coming, Ma.

WHY THE CHRISTMAS MAIL WAS LATE.

WHY FATHER CHRISTMAS WAS LATE.



THE ADVENTURES OF BRANDON BARR, SOLICITOR.

By Henry T. Johnson, Author of "Miss Desperado," "With This Ring," etc.

No. V.—BARR RECEIVES A CHRISTMAS CARD.

A THRILL of horror ran throughout the land. A hanging on Christmas Eve! Prosaic people admitted it was inappropriate: sentimentalists, the great majority, declared it an outrage.

Brandon Barr, in the club smoke-room, listened to the chorus of protest while struggling strenuously with an Oxford don at the chess-board.

"When I told the Home Secretary it would disgrace us in the eyes of Christendom," said the Bishop of Danechester, "he said it was out of his hands—it rested with the Sheriff."

"Exactly," said General Fambridge, "That's the whole secret of the matter. The Sheriff's crazy on the abolition of capital punishment, and his rejoinder is: if the thing is such a horror that it disgraces any especial day, why not do away with it? With that idea he'd have fixed it for Christmas Day itself if he could. He told me so!"

So the talk drifted to capital punishment itself, and later to the crime under discussion, though there was no controversy as to the heinousness of the last. "After all," said the General, "I don't know that we're not letting ourselves merge into something like sickening sentimentality over this affair. I don't suppose this Mr. Larry Larner, with his previous convictions against him, would have hesitated had it happened to be Christmas Eve, or Christmas Day itself, when he made his way into the old Bank at Danechester, rifled the safe, and murdered poor Mr. Barton Hode."

"Then, again," said the Bishop, "think of the man's stubbornness. He admits flinging his jemmy and centre-bit into the river while the constables were chasing him; but he obstinately refuses to account for that missing cash-box, although the loss of its contents means absolute ruin to his murdered victim's daughter. It's a peculiarly atrocious case, and yet, in writing my pastoral letter to my diocese yesterday, I absolutely shuddered at the idea of that man lying there awaiting the morning of Christmas Eve to meet his awful doom."

The General, idly turning over the *Illustrated London News* Christmas Number, its brightly coloured plates depicting Yuletide festival, sprang to his feet, gnawing his moustache, and, pacing the room like a Bengal tiger, and growled, "You're right; it's horrible. They ought to have hanged him earlier, or later."

"At the same time," said Brandon Barr, carefully cutting a cigar, "if they'd hanged him later, the public mind would have been shocked at the idea of a man awaiting in the condemned cell the hour of his hanging all through Christmas Day itself; and, if they'd hanged him earlier, I imagine he would hardly have endorsed the sentimental considerations robbing him of twenty-four hours or more of the exceedingly brief life that is here his portion."

"Answer me this," rasped out the General. "If you had the fixing of the date, would you have made it Christmas Eve?"

Barr held the match he had just struck to his cigar, puffed deliberately for a few seconds, then said quietly—"I don't think I should," glanced at his gold hunter, and, closing it with a click, remarked, "Good-night, everybody." The club-waiter helped him into his fur-lined coat, and he went out into the crisp, frosty starlight.

Threading the busy streets with long strides, chin on chest, he noted the suggestion of coming Christmas in all around; in the shop windows, gay with Christmas presents and Christmas cheer, and decked with gleaming holly; in the greetings and farewells of passers-by to each other—"So long! Merry Christmas!" and he found his thoughts reverting to a grim prison cell in the North Country, and a man sitting with drawn face between his warders. "The sheriff's an ass," he said.

Reaching his chambers in Jermyn Street he was as nearly astonished as he ever allowed himself to be, at observing a young lady turning from his own door and sighing as it closed behind her. She was attired in deep mourning that made her delicate features a trifle paler.

"I beg your pardon," he said, lifting his hat. "Have you been calling to see me?"

Her face lighted eagerly. "Are you Mr. Barr? Why, yes! I recognise you from your portraits in the papers. I am so glad to have caught you; your man was doubtful at what time you might return."

"May I ask your name and business?"

"I am Beatrice Hode," she said, and there was a quiver in her voice as she went on, "daughter of the late Mr. Barton Hode, of Danechester."

Slipping his pass-key into the door, he said, "Pray come in."

A minute later he had relieved her of her heavy sables, and she was seated in the most comfortable of his easy-chairs, her tiny feet on the brass fender of the luxurious sitting-room.

"I will tell you at once my object in calling on you, or, rather, in coming from the North especially to see you. As you are, of course, aware, a man named Lawrence Larner is now lying under sentence of death for——"

To save her the painful words he nodded—"I know, I know."

"The date of his execution," Miss Hode went on, "has been fixed for, of all days in the year, Christmas Eve. Now, Mr. Barr, my father himself loved that day—always called it my day. And on that day devoted himself to my especial happiness from the days when I was a tiny child, and he helped me to deck my Christmas-trees with the toys he had bought me, down to later years, when, as his motherless daughter, I helped him to receive and regale carollers, waits, and visitors in the dear old home which once was so joyful."

For a moment she hid her eyes with her handkerchief. Brandon Barr set his square jaws very hard. "I'm sorry for you. All the world is sorry for you, dear young lady," he said. "What can I do for you?"

"I have heard you spoken of, even in our remote Northern city, by my father and others, as one possessing wonderful influence in all sorts of quarters. I want you to obtain for this man a respite, even, if possible, a reprieve. Yes—I mean it. His execution cannot restore to me that dear father whose splendid nature was such that I am sure if his spirit could plead for the unhappy man, it would. Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord. And I have learned that this man has a wife—and little children."

Brandon Barr, eyeing her with wide eyes, said under his breath, "He has also a record of previous convictions."

"Yes—yes, I know. He got into bad company, and was led away. The first of those terrible previous convictions forced him to the others. But at last he married a good woman who tried to reclaim him, and almost succeeded, for he went straight for years, till some of his evil comrades in old days practically forced him, by threats of violence and of exposure to his employers, to break into the bank. And, in spite of all the evidence, his wife has declared to me that he could not have done—that other wicked thing."

"You've seen her?" The black eyebrows lifted.

"Yes, I told you. She has little children, and they were destitute."

It was not often Brandon Barr quoted Scripture, but he found himself whispering—"Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy."

"Miss Hode, tell me anything I *can* do for you: it shall be done. But that's the question."

"Oh, but you know so much better than I," she protested. "I have written the High Sheriff, the Home Secretary, the Premier; I even thought of trying to find my way to his Majesty himself, and throw myself on my knees at the feet of my King, the fount of mercy."

Barr shook his head. "That would not be, to say the least of it, correct," he said. "True, the solicitor of a condemned man, one Lipski, telegraphed her late Majesty direct that an alibi had been established since the sentence, and the man was respited; only he happened at the moment they announced it to him to be writing something which he hurriedly tore up, but which, pieced together, transpired to be a confession. No, no; not that way. And, frankly, though I honour your splendid magnanimity, I can't share your sympathy for this man Larner. Why, I understand that the stolen bank-notes were your father's own—practically the whole of his fortune."

"That is so," sighed Beatrice Hode. "My dear father had strained every effort to procure that £75,000 in order to avail himself of a magnificent investment that had just come along."

"And yet—"

"And yet, terrible as things are, now will they be helped by this wretched man being hanged? I tell you, terrible as they are, they would be worse if every Christmas Eve was marked in my memory as the day of the last act in the greatest tragedy of my life. Mr. Barr, only one clear day remains. Will you help me?"

"I will if I can," he said, rising and taking both her hands. Then he rang for a taximeter to be called. Beatrice Hode's parting words came from her heart through the cab-window—

"A thousand thanks. Do you know, I am sure you will lift one shadow from my coming Christmas."

"Bates," said Mr. Barr, "pack for two days—quick! We must catch the night train to the North."

A knock came to the cottage door; the shuddering woman folded the two children to herself. "They've come to tell us 'tis over," she whispered.

CHAPTER II.

Strong man as he was, Brandon Barr made no pretension to infallibility. The High Sheriff was obdurate. Abolition of capital punishment was his accepted fetish, and he welcomed in the very horror that thrilled the land an influence which would indirectly sway public opinion towards his side. "If the taking a human life by human hands, that can neither create nor restore it, is so abhorrent on one particular day in the year, it must of necessity be, if even in a minor degree, abhorrent on the remaining three hundred and sixty-four. I have complied with the regulations that prescribe that three Sundays shall elapse between sentence and execution; my powers are as defined as my duties; and I have told the Judge who sentenced Larner, and the Home Secretary himself, that if those powers are interfered with I will resign my office."

Beatrice Hode read disappointment in the great solicitor's strong face on his arrival at the residential quarters adjoining the Old Bank, wherein she had been born and reared, and which she was so shortly to vacate. Somehow, however, she would not read failure in those impassive features—could not associate failure with Brandon Barr.

He had snatched a fairly good night's rest *en route* in his sleeping-carriage. Longer and more exciting journeys were too frequent for him to be otherwise than characteristically collected and absorbed on the work in hand; and for several hours he remained quite alone, pacing the comfortable sitting-room to and fro, hands clasped behind him, head on chest, occasionally halting to refer to the copied depositions, notes of the trial, and plan of the scene of the tragedy lying on the side-table. He was presently interrupted by the appearance of Mr. Abel Rawle, a director of the bank, who had succeeded poor Mr. Hode as managing-director. Mr. Rawle was civil, but only frigidly so, and he made no attempt to conceal his want of sympathy with the agitation for a respite of the condemned man and with Barr's participation in that movement.

"The man is an old offender against the law, and I confess I sympathise far less with him in the terrible plight to which his own actions have brought him and those belonging to him than with my beloved colleague and his dear, bereaved daughter."

To Brandon Barr it seemed that that dear daughter somewhat recoiled from the enveloping, somewhat unctuous, regard of the smug Mr. Rawle.

Yes, Barr decided that "smug" was the word appropriate to this large, heavy, flabby, middle-aged gentleman with the

fat hands, which he so continually stroked, clasped, and waved. Without directly answering him, Barr said—"I should like to be allowed, if I might, to go over the premises, furnished with this plan."

"Yes, yes," said Beatrice.

But Abel Rawle, shrugging his fat shoulders, protested. "I really cannot understand your object or purpose."

But, ignoring him, Barr observed quietly, "I daresay, after closing hours, one of the clerical staff could be detailed off to accompany me?"

"May I ask the reason for your request?" Abel Rawle again interposed. "The man lying under sentence of death was detected red-handed on the scene."

"No, no, not red-handed," said Barr.

"You may quibble if you like," said Rawle, angrily; "the watchman finding the iron-shutter door ajar, entered, and collared the man on the very threshold of the door leading to the bank parlour."

"Exactly," said Barr. "The door A in the plan here; the door by which customers entered the parlour."

"Yes, yes, and the fellow, tripping up our man, fled at top speed, followed by the officer blowing his whistle, and, mark you, flinging away as he went into the river, his jemmy and centre-bit, and doubtless the box containing the missing notes."

"Strange," said Barr, "that while the burglar's tools were recovered, there has been no trace of the cash-box or its contents."

"The villain doubtless flung them into the river while dashing over Chapel Street Bridge."

"But the river has been dragged."

"The cash-box may have sunk into its bed, may have drifted, may have broken and dispersed—a hundred things may have happened."

"Yes," said Barr. "Was there no record of the notes?"

"None; they were Hode's own, and he was just about making a list of them."

"How do you know?" said Barr, quite casually.

"Well, that is the inference," said Rawle. "There was a sheet of paper lying on his desk, his pen was in his hand."

"Don't those iron shutters rattle a bit when opened?" asked Barr. "They ought to."

"The murderer, the man Larner, had oiled the rollers," said Rawle.

"Turt! turt!" At the warning cough of a motor hooter Barr went to and threw up the window.

"Well done, Spragg!" he said, as his own chauffeur, looking up at the window, saluted

"Are you going to mote back to town?" queried Rawle, quite genially.

"Possibly," said Barr. "Anyway, I left word for my man to follow me on here, in case I required him. *Au revoir*, Miss Hode," he said. In a moment he was descending the stairs. "Danechester Castle, Spragg," he said. "The Governor's entrance."

"Turt! turt!" said the six-cylinder car, leaping forward.

"Now what on earth," said Abel Rawle, "does that meddling fool want here?"

"Don't speak of him like that," protested Beatrice Hode. "He is kindness itself, for all they say of his hardness, his want of heart, and his cold, crystalline, calculating brain. I myself brought him here, if you wish to know."

"You!" he hissed, almost gasped. "In Heaven's name, why?"

"Because," she said, "I could not bear the thought of that man Larner expiating his awful crime on Christmas Eve. I tell you, my dear father's own voice seemed calling from the grave to avert a horror so appalling. And I went straight to Brandon Barr, knowing him, though only by repute, as one of the most influential and strongest men of his generation."

For a moment Rawle stared, astounded, and then, with beetling brows and all the placid benignity gone from his fat, pallid face, he said: "And now you see how absolutely you were mistaken; now, perhaps, you realise how much wiser it would have been to place yourself in my hands, as your father's trusted adviser, as your guardian, appointed by his will; as one who will be soon—yes, soon I say, your guardian in another sense."

"No! no!" she said, recoiling with an absolute shudder, "I have told you again and again that cannot be."

"And I tell you, Beatrice Hode, again and again, it must and it shall be! And remember, no matter what people may think, I am a determined man. Come back!"

But she was gone!

Nevertheless, later on, just as her servant had brought in afternoon tea, Abel Rawle again presented himself, ostensibly on the pretence of begging a cup; and again he broached the subject that he knew to be so distasteful to her, but which had become with him an obsession. "You must marry me, Beatrice," he said. "Consider that awful loss; you are practically ruined. What can you do, reared as you have been? Fancy yourself a governess, a lady typist, a nurse."

"The notes may still be recovered."

"They will never be recovered," he said.

"How do you know?" said Brandon Barr, who had re-entered, obscured by the draught-screen.

And Rawle started angrily. "Really, Mr. Barr, is it your custom to enter unannounced?"

"Sorry," said Barr. "Fact is, I hurried up past the servant; it is just on four, and I wanted you and Miss Hode to arrange that inspection of the premises before the clerks have all cleared out."

"I must say I consider it absolutely unnecessary," said Rawle.

But Beatrice Hode exclaimed "No! no! Nothing that Mr. Barr suggests can be unnecessary; he has a reason for everything. And after he has so generously come so far at my request, with such calls as he has on his time, we are all bound to carry out his wishes."

Abel Rawle was still about to expostulate, only suddenly he realised that Brandon Barr's eyes were upon him, set in that hard, contracted gaze which so many people had positively declared hypnotising. His square, hard mouth was harder than usual.

"Very well," he grumbled, "if this fad will satisfy you, and the clerks don't object to remaining, because if they do, I certainly will not compel them."

But the clerical staff, so far from being disinclined, appeared only too anxious to remain after outer doors were closed to answer Barr's inquiries, and afford him every detail of information. Somehow, a strange sense of anticipation possessed him.

"Yes," said the head-cashier, the last man, save the bank-porter, to leave the premises, "Mr. Hode told me he purposed remaining some hours working at material for the forthcoming balance-sheet and to analyse the new investments he was contemplating."

"Exactly," said Barr; "and, let me see, this—the door 'A'—is the only one leading to the bank parlour from the public portion of the bank."

"Exactly."

"Anybody entering from the street by this door, 'B' on the plan, would ordinarily approach the parlour by that door?"

"Yes."

"Would have, in fact, to scale this high counter, rails, or cashiers' desks in order to reach it by the only other door the parlour contains, the door marked 'C' in the plan, by which you and the rest of the staff were in the habit of entering the parlour."

"Of course."

Then Barr turned to the watchman who had surprised Larner. "This door, 'B,' was one you found unsecured, and, having your suspicions, peered through?"

"Yes, Sir."

"And seeing a form between you and the glass door 'A,' you shouted 'Who's there?'"

"Yes, Sir, and I dashed in and collared the man I saw."

"And who tripped you and bolted? The man you chased and secured?"

"Exactly, Sir; the man Lawrence Larner, who is to swing to-morrow."

"Gentlemen," said Brandon Barr, "opposed as I am, on the whole, to the French system of reconstructing in theory the action incidental to a murder, in the presence of the suspect, I must admit that cases sometimes arise in which that system would be invaluable—and this is one of them."

"Extremely interesting," fidgetted Abel Rawle, "but time and tide——"

"Shall not be kept long waiting," said Barr, quickly. "For instance, if I were rehearsing this crime I should never dream of entering by the door B, for the simple reason that a man seated at the point marked by the cross would never have waited seated till I approached him to get behind him and strike him dead; furthermore, by entering from that door, I could not have obtained access to that ebony ruler, which would be lying at one of the desks *inside yonder high-railed counters*. No, gentlemen, in constructing this crime, I should descend that staircase. I should, *en passant*, take the ruler from that ledger-desk."

"I must really be going," said Abel Rawle.

"Wait a bit," said Brandon Barr: "I have nearly finished. I should then, by the door 'B,' approach my victim; I should probably lean over his chair; I should discuss with him the details of the investments to which he intended to apply the huge sum he had told me he had withdrawn from various sources. And just when he had, with the precaution of a business man, expressed his intention of making a list of the numbers and amounts, I should make the murderer say to himself, 'Now is the time, before those notes are listed.' And then the murderer would step back one pace, with his right hand brandishing that heavy ebony weapon, and——"

"Stop! stop! You devil incarnate! It is true what they say. Satan has skilled you to read men's hearts and thoughts!"

It was the murdered man's successor who, wringing his fat hands, shrieked out the words. And Brandon Barr, wheeling round, flung at him an accusing hand, and in a voice not loud, but tense and more terrible than thunder, exclaimed—

"Abel Rawle, you were misnamed: they should have called you Cain!"

Limb of the law though he was, Brandon Barr had scant regard for speed limits, and that night two mighty white carbides swooped south along the Great North Road, risking overheated bearings, police-traps, and all.

Naturally, the most ordinary English citizen might justly resent being roused from his bed some two hours after midnight; and a Secretary of State for Home Affairs could not be expected in such circumstances to be otherwise than furious—till Brandon Barr had told the other circumstances.

. . .

Outside the prison walls, in the dank, raw December air, wan, pinched faces looked up at the flagstaff, listening to a tolling bell. They were whispering their wonders: "Will he confess, or will he stick to it—that, coerced by old convict comrades, and sore pressed by want, he went in only to rob; and, surprised, turned and fled, not having even robbed."

In a gray stone corner a bent, grizzled old woman crouched, waiting—waiting, knowing that Hell had no worse agony in store for her, since Earth had this. Watching her they whispered, "Wife and childer kept away, as 'twas reet they should; her couldna' keep away, her 's his muther."

Hark! one—two—six—seven—eight! Why—why does not the black banner of doom flutter free?

. .

Inside the grey walls the white-surpliced priest has led the dread cortège to the cross-beam, the few lookers-on bare and bend their heads.

"Man that is born of a woman hath but a short time to live."

Dong!

"He cometh up and is cut down like a flower."

Dong!

Between the bell strokes a man's voice rises on the clammy air. The voice of the man with the strapped arms with the cap over his face—

> Just as I am, without one plea,
> But that Thy Blood was shed for me,
> And that Thou bidst me come to Thee,
> O Lamb of God, I come!

Dong! The man who has borne the straps till now, having fixed them, steps back—there is a hush—then—

"Stop! stop!" a voice cries, frantically, "A respite! a respite!"

. . . . . .

A knock came to the cottage door; the shuddering woman folded the two children to herself. "They've coom to tell us 'tis over," she whispered. "God in heaven, what a Christmas Eve!" But her voice broke in a cry—"Miss Beatrice? Lass, don't 'ee speak to me."

"I must! I must! for I bring you tidings of comfort and of joy. Your husband has been respited! He will be reprieved, for another, now dead by his own hand, has made, as far as might be, restitution, and has confessed the crime!"

Even while the sound of Yuletide bells floated through his windows, Brandon Barr fixed in his overmantel a tiny card, inscribed—"May your Christmastide be happy. You deserve it.—BEATRICE HODE."

The great motor-car dashed on through the snow, for there was no thought of the speed limit that night.

NOTES ON CHRISTMAS PRESENTS

However clever our fingers and however busy we may be in the preparation of our Christmastide gifts, no doubt a large amount of shopping will remain. When one has to go gift-buying for one's circle of friends with shillings and not pounds in one's purse, it is sometimes difficult to hit upon dainty and acceptable gifts. Here are a few suggestions of articles and their prices which, it is hoped, will appeal to the most varied tastes. Useful gifts are always nice, smart velvet belts in black, white, and colours costing 1s. 6½d.; gold and silver ones with small buckles back and front are 9½d. Then, very nice stockings in either black or brown cost 4s. for three pairs; while small handkerchiefs, lace-edged, start at 2½d. each. Beautiful ones, with a border of real lace, cost only 1s. 0½d. each.

Presents. Cheap, Useful, Various

For the Girl-Friend,

Glove-supporters, which are in reality elastic bracelets for keeping up the long gloves, are a decided novelty. They are beaded and spangled, and embroidered in pearls, coral, and turquoise. The prices start at 1s. 11½d. per pair. White table-centres are very much in fashion just now, and for 2s. 6½d. a beautiful little specimen in lace and linen can be bought, which would make a pretty tray-cloth, small afternoon-tea cloth, or table centre. For use as the latter it could be improved by the addition of a bow of satin ribbon in each corner. It is often difficult to know how to send odds-and-ends to table in a tempting way. A small fancy dish or plate is just what is required to serve up daintily a solitary tomato, a single tart, or a remnant of pie or pudding. Little Dresden dishes suitable for the purpose cost only 5½d. or small white ones, leaf-shaped, with gilt handles, only 3½d. Then pretty bon-bon dishes in electro cost 1s. 9½d., or, in a very dainty style upon a stand, 3s. 11d. Very charming, too, are the tiny ones of mother-of-pearl, boat-shaped, on a stand, the prices of which start at 4s. 6d. Solid silver match-boxes commence at 3s. 9d., and a lovely set of six silver buttons is a veritable bargain at 4s. 9d. Small silver toast-racks are 3s. 9d.; while a novelty for breakfast in bed is provided by a fascinating egg-stand, price 8s. 6d., the egg fitting into a circle, and a tiny plate underneath to hold the spoon, salt, etc.

Housewife, Mother, Father,

Sister and Sweetheart.

All kinds of quaint and artistic brooches can be purchased for 1s., 1s. 6d., and 2s. 6d. An enamel-and-pearl brooch, in the shape of a wreath, with a pendant in the centre, costs 1s. 6½d.; safety-pin brooches, set with matrix, are only 1s.; vivid red brooches, having a divided resemblance to a ladybird and a fly, 1s.; beautiful crystal brooches, in all colours, 1s.; amethyst brooches, surrounded by seed pearls, 1s. 6d. The Diabolo brooch, in French gilt and paste stones, which, as its name suggests, represents the toy of that name, costs 1s. 11½d.; a set of horn combs for the hair, prettily set with bands of brilliants, price 5s. 11d. the set of three. Then a useful blotting-pad for 1s., or a good-sized diary, price 6d., are simple gifts which would be appreciated by many. Under the same category come smart little address-books, price 1s.

YULETIDE'S MADE FOR JESTING—

Let dull care be resting
What care you or I?
Yuletide 's made for jesting—
Soon enough goes by.

Christmas joys aren't lasting,
Games can't play for aye,
It's no time for fasting—
Just a time for play.

Young or old, no matter,
Man, or child, or maid,
Naught but care to shatter—
Man 's a fool who 's staid.

STI[illegible]G—SOON ENOUGH GOES BY.

Time enough for sorrow
All the long year round,
Don't think of the morrow
When such joys abound.

Tears may sound romantic,
When a poet sings,
But simply drive me frantic—
Want to break up things.

Come and shout and bellow,
Make a beastly noise,
Show that though you're mellow,
Heart is but a boy's.

XMAS CRACKERS

E. POLLOCK.

Solving the Difficulty.

The representative of a wholesale tobacco house, on his last round before Christmas, called at the co-operative stores at X——, and, as usual, he offered a box of fifty cigars to the manager.

But the manager at X—— is a good man, and objected to receiving the box as a gift, saying that he would pay for it.

"Very well," said the commercial: "give me a shilling for it."

The manager, having thus squared his conscience, began to search his pockets, but found nothing less than a florin. As the traveller had no change, the latter said—

"Never mind; pay me next time."

"Nay," was the reply; "keep the two-shilling piece and send another box."

Tit for Tat.

Wife: "John, dear, I am going to buy a Christmas present for you to-day. I am thinking of getting one of those mantelpiece ornaments in Glasse and Company's window."

Husband: that's an excellent idea. I think I will just go and get a Christmas present for you at the same time."

Wife (sweetly): "And what did you think of buying, dear?"

Husband: "Well, I think I will get a real badger hair, half-guinea shaving-brush."

Well Recommended.

Mistress (to maid she is thinking of engaging for extra work at Christmas): "You say you are well recommended?"

Maid: "Indeed, Ma'am, I have thirty-nine excellent references."

Veiled.

A pompous-looking man came out of his club last Christmas Eve and chartered a hansom cab. On reaching his destination, he only gave his driver the shilling required by law.

The driver looked at the coin and bit his lip. Then, in the most courteous manner, he motioned to his fare to get in again.

"Do step in again, Sir," he said. "I could ha' druv ye a yard or two further for this 'ere."

Duly Earned.

It was Christmas morning, and as Jones stood smoking on the doorstep a seedy-looking individual, wearing a ragged suit and with a red nose, came up the garden-path, and addressed him thus—

"Merry Christmas, guv'nor!"

"Same to you, my good man," said Jones. "What can I do for you?"

"Well, guv'nor, I've called fer me Christmas-box."

"Hum! I don't seem to know you. Are you the chimney-sweep?"

"No, guv'nor; I'm the chap who were playing the cornet last Christmas, an' yer told me to take my hook."

"Oh! you played the cornet, did you?" said Jones, in a threatening voice. "And why should I give you a Christmas-box, eh?"

"Becos I ain't playing it this year, guv'nor."

Then Jones paid up.

Made a Difference.

Two travellers on their way home from the North for the Christmas holidays met in the dining car of an express.

"How's business? Getting many orders?" asked the stout man.

"More than I can handle," said the short man. "How's it with you? Had my orders lately?"

"Well, business is pretty good. I haven't had an order for a year and a half, but I expect to get one next spring," said the stout man.

A stranger sitting at the same table was seized with curiosity, and ask the short man:

"Your stout friend certainly puzzles me. What's his line?"

"Suspension bridges."

Criticised.

"I hope you enjoyed the sermon this morning, David," remarked a clergyman's wife to her gardener last Christmas.

"Pretty well, mum, thank you all the same," was the reply. "I won't say as how it worn't inspired, but if it were, the inspiration seemed to be dealt out a bit sparin'-like. Master harped too much upon them poor ignorant shepherds to please me, mum."

"But it was a Christmas sermon, you must remember, David."

"Just so, mum," replied the gardener; "but I don't see why he should make shepherds out to be so ignorant, though. My brother Esau is a shepherd, mum."

"Oh! ah, well. Your master was merely speaking of the shepherds of those days, and that was nearly two thousand years ago."

"Well, p'raps you wouldn't mind just mentionin' it to master, mum," said David, "but shepherds have picked up a bit sin' those days. They ain't so ignorant now as to get sittin' about on the damp ground, Christmas or no Christmas, leastways shepherds like my brother Esau ain't, mum."

Backed Up.

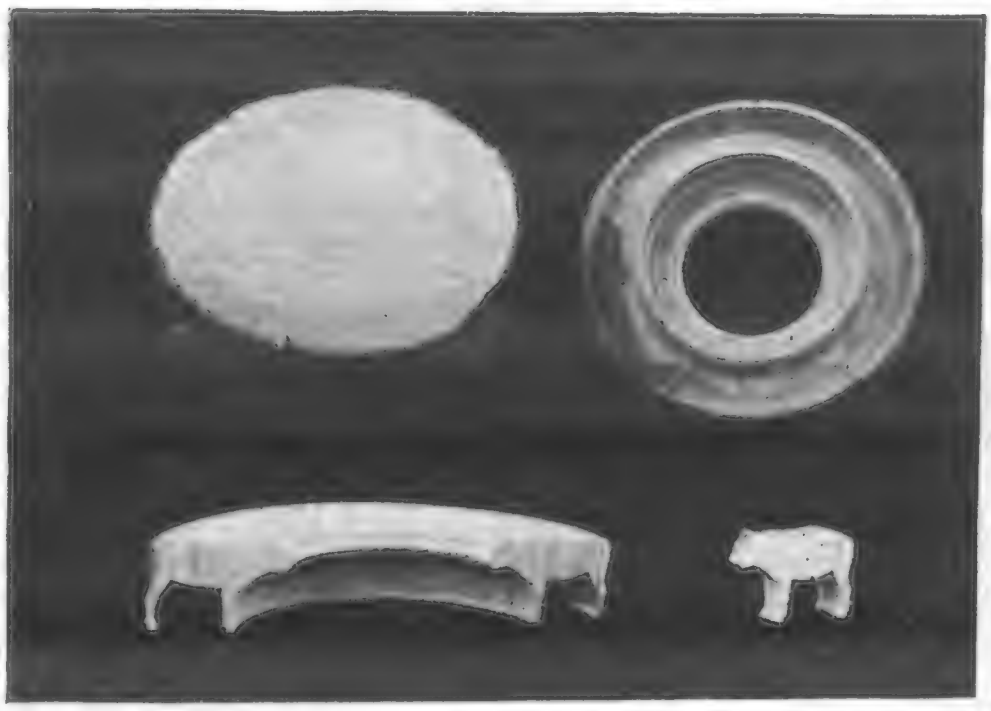
Two men were talking about a friend and his motor-car.

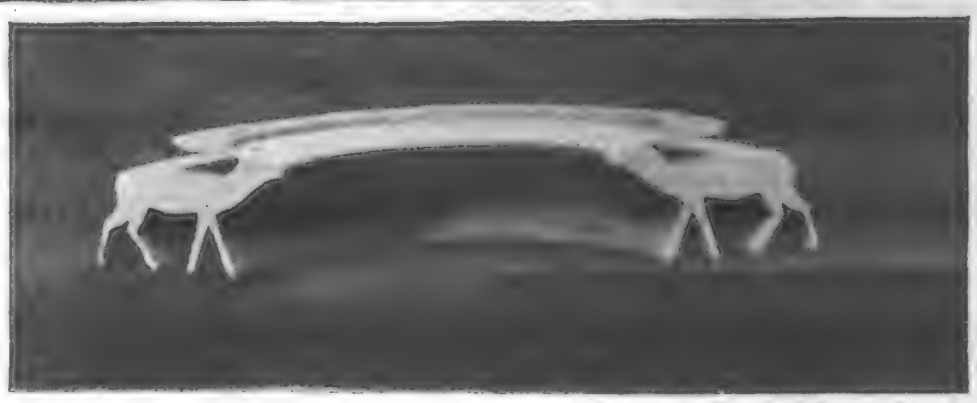
"He seems to be very well satisfied with it," remarked one. "Hasn't paid a copper in repairs all the nine months he's had it, he tells me."

"Yes," replied the other. "I heard the same story from the fellow who's done all the repairs."

HOW TOMMY SAW THE PANTOMIME.

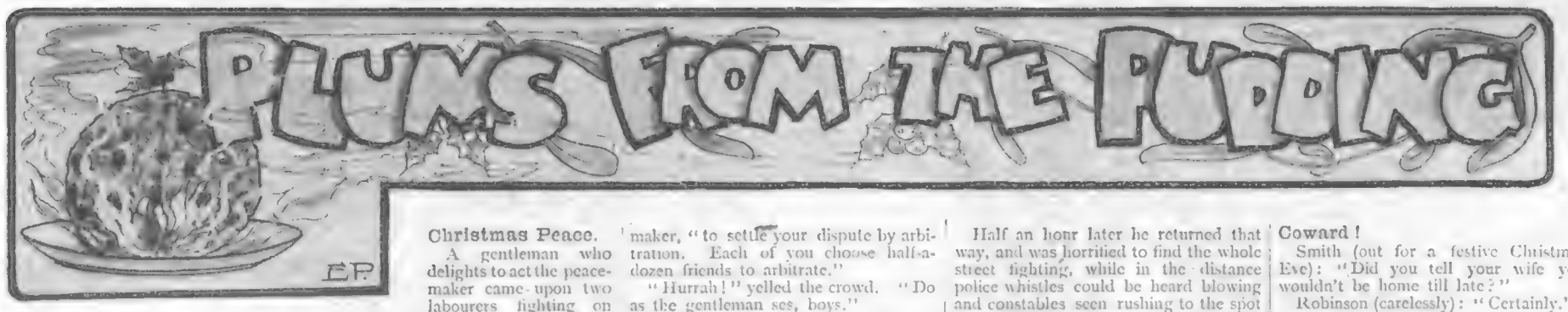
TURNING OUT TOYS BY THOUSANDS





EDMUND POLLOCK

Many of the cheaper toys sold in England at Christmas are made abroad, a large proportion coming from Germany. In that country the manufacture has been reduced to an extraordinary system, which enables the toys to be turned out at a very low price. Our illustrations show the method in which the animals are made for Noah's Arks: first, a block of wood, the same wood after being turned on a lathe, and then the operator chipping the animals from the circle of wood by the aid of a hammer and knife. All these stages of manufacture are shown in our photographs, and also a whole family at work finishing the articles, and a pack being taken to market.



Forestalled.

A lady of uncertain age, whose voice, according to general opinion, would have done no discredit whatever to a screech-owl, deemed it her vocation not merely to lead, but also to drown, the efforts of the village carol-singers. Rendered desperate by the experience of past years, the choir rose in protest, and in somewhat cowardly fashion threw it upon the vicar to inform the lady that she must sing more in harmony, or there would be inevitably a bigger collection of brickbats than of coins when the choir went forth carolling at Christmas-time.

Calling on the lady as soon as he could brace himself up to his unpleasant duty, the vicar opened the proceedings with remarks upon the weather, and the probabilities of a mild winter. Then an adroit reference to a "Green Christmas" gave him what seemed a good opportunity to fulfil his unpleasant mission.

"And now, Miss P——," he said, in the blandest manner he could assume, "I have been asked to say a word to you about your singing."

"Don't mention it!" the lady broke in, before the vicar could utter another syllable, "not to me be the praise—it 's a gift!"

No Harmony.

"My dear, don't you intend to invite Mr. and Mrs. Green to your Christmas party?" asked Mr. Biller.

"Certainly not!"

"Why not, my dear? They are good friends of ours."

"What if they are? I am going to invite Mr. and Mrs. Brown."

"Well, can't you invite the Greens as well?"

"Why, John Biller, you shock me with your taste! Brown and Green in my drawing-room together! Why, next you'll be asking me to wear blue and yellow. I declare, you men have no idea whatever of harmony."

Poor Bishop.

A certain eloquent bishop had preached to a country congregation, which, owing to a heavy fall of snow, was very thin.

After the service one of the churchwardens, who had been struck by the sermon, but felt that it had been somewhat thrown away, remarked:

"On such a day your lordship might ha' gi'en us a wusser sermon."

"If your lordship could ha' gi'en us a wusser," put in the other churchwarden, who wished to be very complimentary indeed.

Unequal To It.

The charitable squire, who had been in the habit of giving an old woman a turkey from his own farm each Christmas, sent her instead a written order, entitling her to receive a free turkey at the local poulterer's.

She could not read, however, and her discontent was manifest to the messenger who tried to explain things to her.

"It's just the same in the long run," he said. "If you take that order to the poulterer's, you'll get your Christmas box as usual. It's a paper turkey this time, don't you see?"

"A paper turkey, is it?" the disappointed and indignant lady repeated. "That's summat new. Last year it wor a leather turkey, too tough to eat; this year it's a paper one: and next year, if I lives to see it, it'll most likely be a cast-iron turkey. Tak' it back to the squire, wi' my compliments, and ax him if he thinks I'm an ostrich, or what?"

To Amuse the Horse.

A London cabman, hailed by a countryman up for Christmas, who was dressed in a style well calculated to make the Cockneys laugh, shrugged his shoulders, and was about to drive on when the countryman shouted to him—

"What! You refuse to take me, although you are not engaged?"

"Well, no," said the cabby; "I 'll take you just to amuse the poor old horse!"

Christmas Peace.

A gentleman who delights to act the peacemaker came upon two labourers fighting on Boxing Day. The gent'eman pushed through the crowd, and persuaded the combatants to desist.

"Let me beg of you, my good fellows," earnestly besought the peacemaker, "to settle your dispute by arbitration. Each of you choose half-a-dozen friends to arbitrate."

"Hurrah!" yelled the crowd. "Do as the gentleman ses, boys."

Having seen the twelve arbitrators selected, the peacemaker went on his way rejoicing in the thought of having once again prevailed upon brute force to yield to peaceful argument.

Half an hour later he returned that way, and was horrified to find the whole street fighting, while in the distance police whistles could be heard blowing and constables seen rushing to the spot from all quarters.

"Good gracious! What is the matter now?" asked the peacemaker.

"Sure, Sorr," was the reply, "the arbithrators is at work."

Coward!

Smith (out for a festive Christmas Eve): "Did you tell your wife you wouldn't be home till late?"

Robinson (carelessly): "Certainly."

"You did?"

"Yes, I should think so."

"And what did she say?"

"Well, as soon as I had told her, I rang off the telephone."

A SHORT ARM MAKES A SAD HEART.

WHY A CHRISTMAS CARD DID NOT ARRIVE.

'P.I.P.' Gardener and Poultry Farmer.

DEC. 7 to 13.—We are getting well on now towards the shortest day, and one's garden programme will soon be coming increasingly lengthy.

My Garden Plans.

A reminder that this is the Christmas Number of the *P.I.P.* will throw one's thoughts to the few days' vacation, when on Christmas and Boxing Days the keen amateur will snatch a few hours of daylight in his garden, and not entirely with the idea of raising an appetite for the good fare of the Yuletide table. I would therefore point out that many gardeners (my humble self among them) will be busy planting, and that orders might well be placed now with the favoured nurseryman. All kinds of fruit trees, roses, evergreen shrubs, climbing plants, herbaceous border plants, the later varieties of bulbs, and so on, may all be planted at Christmas time; in fact, granted there is no frost in the ground, December is an excellent month for such operations. My plans for this particular week depend entirely upon the weather, but I hope to be able to give my rose beds a good mulch of well-decayed manure. This should be spread evenly over the surface, and forked lightly into the ground. It is a good plan to wind straw round the base of freshly planted rose-trees as a safeguard against frost. Speaking of frost, some of the earlier planted bulbs may now be peeping through the ground, and these will need protection from severe cold at nights by a light covering of leaves, bracken, or rough garden mats. It is very injurious to bulbs to be nipped by frost at this early stage. Then I hope to be able to give time to nailing up wall fruit and climbers, and it is an excellent opportunity to overlook one's garden labels, and replenish worn-out specimens. I have a little turf to put down if the weather is favourable, and if you are thinking of performing a similar task, I would remind you that a "good firm understanding" is the great difficulty to first overcome; if your turf is laid on soft, yielding ground, it will speedily go boggy and become the reverse of level.

Christmas Presents for a Gardener.

Many and many an article would form an inexpensive and most acceptable Christmas present for an amateur gardener. A well-made watering-can with one or two roses, a strong galvanised iron garden-barrow, a length of hose, or a syringe should be particularly useful. Sets of tools come under the category, but well-forged, workmanlike implements should alone be selected. Going to higher-priced things, quaint rustic arches and garden-seats or chairs would delight any amateur's heart, and as this is between the seasons for such requisites, prices are correspondingly low. I do not advise purchasing plants or other growths as presents: it is like buying a smoker a pipe without first consulting him, and we all have our individual tastes. To go still higher in the scale of costs, many a gardener is lacking a roller or a lawn-mower, and even portable rustic summer-houses are cheap enough now, comparatively speaking, and one of these might meet the requirements of some generous donor of a gardener's Christmas-box.

Preparing Clay Soil.

Many a garden, excellent in point of aspect and size, is a sticky, glutinous morass in winter and a baked, arid waste in summer through the thick clay which serves it as soil. With, perseverance, however, even this obstacle to gardening success may be removed, and now is the best possible time to commence operations. First of all, stretch a garden-line across the plot, and, with a broad-pronged fork, dig out a deep trench, throwing the earth forward in large unbroken clods. Now fill in the trench with long-strawed manure, vegetable refuse, and ashes; then, setting back your line, dig out a second trench, throwing the earth forward into the first trench. If this plan be followed now, and the ground is left exposed to the frost and winter winds, the result of a second digging in February and March will amply repay the hard work and trouble. In fact, when spring comes, the soil will be found to break up easily, and the top spit will be almost powdery. On the other hand, if the soil is left without this December trenching and manuring, it will be found in the spring to be sour, water-logged, and practically unworkable.

Lilies-of-the Valley.

Have you a lily-of-the-valley bed in your garden? If not, you are minus one of the delights of gardening, and had better take the present excellent opportunity of rectifying the omission. The crowns for the open garden may now be purchased from any nursery or garden stores, and quite a large bundle is obtainable for a shilling or eighteenpence. The best situation for a lily-of-the-valley bed is a shady corner, and the soil should be carefully dug, and have incorporated with it a little well-decayed manure and plenty of leaf-mould. Plant the crowns two inches apart, and have them some two inches beneath the soil, and when the bed has been prepared, cover it with a thick top-dressing of decayed leaves. Solomon's Seal (the male of the lily-of-the-valley), with its tall, graceful leaves and numerous white, bell-like flowers, might well be planted near by to give a finish to the corner.

Stacking Manure.

There is a right and a wrong way of doing every operation in the garden, and the fact that I have just been stacking manure reminds me that even this unpleasant, though needful, duty is sometimes mismanaged. If manure is allowed to lie scattered about in the garden it quickly loses its valuable properties. The ammonia is lost entirely, and other valuable parts are dissipated into the air. The proper way is to make a firm, tidy stack, and the manure should be piled up with the fork evenly, so that it may ferment or "heat." In dry weather water should be thrown on the manure to ensure speedy "heating," for, until "heating" takes place, the essential properties do not generate. Moreover, the seeds of weeds cannot be destroyed until heating has taken place, and manure heats far better in tightly-compressed bulk than otherwise. Green manure is positively harmful to the roots of all plants and trees, and nothing but well-decayed matter ought to be used. Stacks of manure should be turned over several times during the winter. Whilst on this subject, I might mention that the sweepings of the fowlhouse should never be brought into contact with seeds or roots till they have lain in the air for some time and become thoroughly rotted.

CHRISTMAS DAY IN THE COUNTRY.

MY BRIEF REPLIES.

G. WILSON (Stourbridge).—No, you must certainly not lay poison for your neighbours' cats, however aggressive they may be. Try wire-netting to make your fences cat-proof, and stretch it on standards at a slight angle away from the fence or wall.

GEORGE K.—Pyrus Japonica you should ask for. Yes, it may well be trained up the wall of a house or a fence.

I am always pleased to answer inquiries, and will do so through the post direct, when a stamped and addressed envelope is enclosed for the purpose. Inquiries should be addressed to me personally at the *P.I.P.* Editorial Offices, 172, Strand, London, W.C.

A. COURLAND MARSHALL.

IS YOUR MONEY SAFE?

Why run risks when fortunes can be made without any fear of loss?
Read the famous "Blue Book," which shows you how you may do this.

2/6 MAY EARN £5000! FACT, NOT FICTION.

During the last few weeks the papers have been full of news of financial panics and disasters. Abroad, in the United States, there is widespread desolation and misery, caused by the remarkable financial crisis which has resulted in the failure of so many industries and businesses, and which has also caused banks to break in every direction. Money is at a premium, for people will not be satisfied with anything else but current coin.

Cheques, notes, and bills are utterly disregarded, for when presented they cannot be met, and hence will not satisfy the urgent, pressing needs of the money.

What a spectacle, for there must be millions of American people who are more or less financially affected by this great catastrophe, and in a great degree it is the ordinary public who are the sufferers.

Small wonder then, that people at home, in the British Isles, are witnessing with uneasy minds this terrible state of affairs, and regarding the diminution of British gold reserves with anxious trepidation of spirit.

Small wonder that our bank authorities are increasing the Bank rate for gold, so that now it is as high as 7 per cent, with the likelihood of going higher still!

Millions of pounds are being hurriedly ferried over the Atlantic, and yet the cry is for more and more.

It will be long ere the United States recover their financial equilibrium, and it can be taken for granted that investors over there have learnt a lesson they will remember for years.

UNSOUND INVESTMENT METHODS.

Over-capitalisation, the floating of unsound concerns, a mad desire to make money in any possible way, has had its inevitable result, and the state of affairs should serve as an object lesson to all the civilized races of the world.

There are always two ways of making money—the safe way and the unsafe way, and why anyone should choose the latter is past all comprehension, for without a doubt the safe way is also the quickest and most remunerative way.

Yet, just as some skaters are never happy unless they are venturing on thin ice and running perilous risks of losing their lives, so will some investors always refuse the sound surface of solid ice which honest investment provides, in order to glide over the treacherous expanses where the "Danger" board is placed.

One has scarcely sympathy for people who wilfully expose themselves to physical hazards, and by the same process of reasoning it is difficult to be sorry for those who carelessly run the risk of losing their money by unsafe and speculative investments.

Sometimes, though, it is not sheer wilfulness but actual ignorance of better ways and methods, and in such cases educationary measures must be resorted to.

In this respect, every person who has money to spare, be it ever so little, a few pounds or a few shillings, should seek the most expert and practical experience.

This is now obtainable by all, for the famous book alluded to at the head of this article can be had by anyone.

THE BOOK YOU OUGHT TO READ.

There is not a man or woman in the United Kingdom who can afford to neglect the reading of this work, for it contains the most reliable and trustworthy information on the subject which is near and dear to the hearts of all, and it tells you plainly, sincerely, and in the most understandable manner, just how you ought to invest your money in order to create wealth for yourself.

This book, though so essential to your future and prospects, can still be easily obtained by any reader of *The Penny Illustrated Paper*, for special arrangements which will later on be referred to, have been made whereby you can have it sent on to you without charge.

This is exceptionally good news, and this fact should be borne in mind by every man or woman who is reading this article.

WHAT IS THIS SAFE YET HIGHLY PROFITABLE INVESTMENT?

A very natural question, and one which will now be answered.

No highly flattering prospectus is needed in order to delude you into anticipation of huge returns. No highly seasoned reports of great possibilities are required to make it seductively attractive. No, it is based on sound, solid, and simple facts which cannot help being recognised by even the most slow-witted individual. This great book, known as the "Blue Book," tells you to invest in the official stock now so well-known as Premium Bonds, and it tells you exactly why.

As you read it you will see that Premium Bonds are:

(1) The highest class and most fully secured investments it is possible to make.

(2) That your capital can never be lost.

(3) That your interest is always the same, and

(4) That you are provided with a multitude of opportunities of turning your smallest investment into thousands of pounds.

Think of that: here, at your very hand, is provided the fullest possibility of creating for yourself a huge fortune, without any fear of capital being jeopardised. What other investment offers you this?

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Premium Bonds are Government and Municipal issues, sanctioned, endorsed and guaranteed by nearly all European countries; adopted, for instance, by France, Austria, Russia, and Belgium, and such famous and wealthy cities as Paris, Vienna, Brussels, Marseilles, and Lyons.

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What you lend to the Government or Municipality is returned with the largest remuneration possible, and the great principle of Bond redemption which characterises them allows every year for all Bond-holders to participate in the distribution of cash bonuses or Premiums amounting to many thousands of pounds.

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Let us take a typical case—the City of Brussels Municipal Bonds of the issue of 1902.

These Bonds cost £5 to acquire (or they may be bought by small weekly or monthly instalments). They bear you an unvarying 2½ per cent. They are secured to the hilt, can always be disposed of for cash, and yet, in addition to these features, they offer to every holder no fewer than 275 prospects every year of making fortunes from £8000 downwards!

In plain words, you can buy a City of Brussels Bond for 2/6 weekly. You cannot lose your money, you are earning interest at once, and yet you may, from this small, simple sum, secure no less a fortune than £8000.

And this is not for one year alone; but every succeeding year sees Bond-holders earning these gigantic fortunes from small investments.

Now, the Blue Book we have referred to gives you particulars of every profitable Premium Bond issue obtainable. It tells you exactly how much they cost, what interest they bear, what awards they make.

It shows you how much it would cost in any case to acquire one by partial payments, and you must remember that from the date of the first payment, the whole advantages of the Bond are yours. This is the wonderful book which has guided thousands to the road whereby wealth is made from the smallest investments, by means destitute of the slightest semblance of risk, and it is the book you should obtain and read at once.

All that is necessary to secure a free copy of this valuable work is to give your full name and address, and to post your request to the International Securities Syndicate, 361, Westminster Palace Gardens, Victoria Street, London, S.W.

The Snow Fairies.

By . . . **Nellie Pollock.**

A CHRISTMAS STORY.

CHAPTER I.

IT was Christmas Eve—not a pretty, old-fashioned Christmas Eve, such as you read of in the story-books, but a damp cold misty one. Little streams of mud slowly issued from every corner, making their way along the wet, brown pavements, and a dull yellow fog was creeping up stealthily from behind the blocks of tall, dismal-looking houses.

Muvver and Jack were sitting together in the firelight, talking in little low whispers. Jack's dark curly head was nestling against Muvver's knee, while her soft, gentle hand stole tenderly through his black, tangled curls.

Muvver was very young-looking, indeed her face was so youthful in its soft round curves and wondrous sweetness, that you would have scarcely believed that she was really a "grown-up" lady but for the fact that her bright golden hair was twisted up into a smooth, shining knot on her neck, and her faded blue skirt reached down to the tips of her dear, shabby little shoes.

Jack was gazing thoughtfully into the fire, and if you had watched him very closely, you would have noticed that now and then his long eye-lashes fluttered up and down very quickly, and his small ruddy lips trembled. Muvver noticed it, but she made no remark.

Presently Jack rubbed his eyes, and then Muvver heard a low sob.

"Muvver" he whispered, with a quivering sigh, "Aren't we ever going to have a real, proper Christmas? There's—there's no sn-sn-ow—only mud" and Jack gave a little gulp.

Muvver smiled sadly as she drew him up on to her knee and kissed his wet, brown cheeks.

"Poor little boy" she whispered, as a sad little tear rolled down her smooth, pink cheek. "You want one of the dear old-fashioned Christmases; but we never have them now, darling. The little snow-flakes do not wish to forsake their lovely palace above for our dismal fog and rain, because it makes them sad, and then they cannot dance and play as they love to do," and Muvver looked across at the cold dreary picture of the world without and shivered.

"Poor little man" she murmured, burying her pale, smooth head among his black curly locks. "And we're poorer than ever, Jack—there's not—not even a pudding." And dear little Muvver swallowed something hard that jumped up in her throat just then, and hugged Jack tighter than ever; but he didn't cry any more, because he knew it made Muvver sad, so he stroked her smooth white chin with his brown little fingers, and slipped down on the rug again, and tried to pretend that there was no brown, slippery mud on the pavement outside—no ugly shadows rising up from behind the house-tops—but that all was fresh and white, and glistening with the dancing snow-flakes—just as the story-books told.

He didn't look out of the window any more, because somehow it made him shiver. Oh! He had expected such a different Christmas Eve. How delightedly he had looked forward to the snow-balls, and the skating-pond—oh! and Jack gave a quivering sigh, for instead of a glistening carpet of smooth, crisp snow-flakes, inky pools of mud slowly travelled along the damp, dirty pavements, making dull music as they filtered through to the gutters. Just then there shot into the room a bright, welcome ray of light, as the lamp-lighter trudged past on his way home.

"Seven o'clock," said Muvver, as she lit the lamp and drew the curtains. "Come deatie, upstairs to bed," and she lifted Jack up in her arms and kissed him again and again.

When Muvver came downstairs after tucking him up in his cosy little bed, she sat in front of the fire, looking very sad as she watched the flickering flames slowly rise up the chimney. There was no cheery Christmas pudding for her little boy this year; no plump, smiling goose to beam at them cheerily from the big white dish—not even a bunch of holly! Then her sad little face dropped lower and lower, till her small bright head sank on to her outstretched arms, and the next minute sad tears were streaming down her fresh young face.

CHAPTER II.

When Muvver had gone downstairs, Jack popped out from the warm, cosy blankets and knelt up on his little white bed.

"Oh God," he prayed with tiny, brown fingers tightly clasped, and pleading brown eyes earnestly upraised towards the sky, "Please give us one of the dear old-fashioned Christmases, 'cos Muvver likes them," and, smiling a tender little smile of happiness, he climbed down from the bed and pattered over to the window. Then shivering at the gloomy picture of drizzling rain, he jumped back to his warm, cosy bed, and buried his dimpled chin in the blankets.

When Muvver had gone downstairs, Jack popped out from the warm, cosy blankets and knelt up on his little white bed.

CHAPTER III.

Up in the Snow-Queen's Palace, the fairies were clustered together in a long marble hall.

"My dear children," said the Queen in a sad voice, "I'm afraid the mortals do not wish us to decorate their Christmas now. Once upon a time they could not do without us; but now—now they are too busy to bother about the Snow-Fairies," and the Queen heaved a very deep sigh, as a pensive sadness crept into her pretty eyes, and her tiny lips drooped piteously.

"Oh, lovely Queen, do not let that worry you" cried a beautiful little snow-fairy, as she lightly flittered over and entwined her arms about the Queen's neck. "As long as we have you, nothing will ever trouble us. Why should you worry and put yourself out for those great ugly mortals whose only aim in life is to make money? Ugh! They make me shudder" cried the tiny creature with an expression of disgust. "They have no taste for the beautiful—money, money, money, that is all they think about" and she lightly kissed the Queen on her smooth white brow, and stroked her delicate cheek with her own satiny fingers. "Even if we were to go down and sprinkle their world with snow," she continued "they'd never notice it, but think that the baker's man had been spilling the flour," and then all the fairies burst into a silvery ripple of laughter at their sister's sally.

But in spite of the little fairy's cheery words and pretty caresses, the Queen still looked very sad and thoughtful, for it hurt her gentle heart to think that the mortals did not want her to decorate their world with beautiful snow. As each Christmas came and went, they cared less and less for the lovely fleecy snow-flakes, and as the Queen thought of it, a sad tear crept into her eyes, and her pretty head dropped pathetically, as the glistening tears slowly rolled down her cheeks.

"Oh, I cannot rest," she said at last, heaving a deep sigh "I'll go for a ride to the world below, and see what the mortals are doing without us. Farewell, dear children," she cried, stepping into her sleigh and taking the white satin reins in her wee pink hands, "Farewell, and amuse yourselves until I return." Then airily blowing a kiss to them as they clustered about her, she lightly whipped up her snow-white ponies; then away she went through the cold, clear air, the wind kissing her smooth white cheeks and leaving them glowing with pinkness, while a glad light shone in her starry blue eyes as they danced with joy. Faster and faster she went, until, out of breath, she reined in her ponies and alighted on a tiny window-sill, and peeping through the glass, she saw a small brown-faced boy kneeling up on his bed with clasped hands and big brown eyes earnestly upraised to the evening sky.

"Oh God," she heard him murmur, "Please give us one of the dear old-fashioned Christmases, Cos Muvver likes them."

"Oh," whispered the Queen in a tone of rapture, as a quiver of joy shot through her heart, "Someone loves us—someone wants us to cheer, their Christmas" and a smile of delight stole over her tiny, delicate face, making it bewitchingly beautiful, as she once more whipped up her snow-white ponies and alighted on a ledge just beneath the little boy's window. Peeping in, she saw a pretty little golden-haired lady gazing wistfully into the flickering flames, her long white hands folded in her lap, and her soft red lips moving as though she were speaking.

"One of the dear old-fashioned Christmases," she whispered with a dreamy smile in her sad blue eyes. "Oh little Jack, then you'd tramp through the snow, with the fairy flakes chasing each other in their glee as they rushed past you kissing your cheeks and romping around you—then, little man, how happy you'd be in your play," and a faint smile broke over her face and trembled on her sweet, tender mouth.

"How sweet and lovely," whispered the Snow Queen, as she watched the firelight stray through the golden waves that rippled over the drooping head, "She is so delicate and lovely for a mortal—she really might be one of ourselves, as far as her daintiness and beauty go," and the Queen's pretty blue eyes beamed upon the little lady within with an enchanting smile. "She wants us, too—how beautiful it is to feel that someone wants you. At last—at last, someone really wishes us to visit their dull bleak earth, and beautify it with our feathery flakes. Oh, how glad I am," and the delighted little creature started off in search of her fairies to tell them the joyous news.

"Oh! how dull we have been without you, sweet, lovely Queen. How good it is to see you back again" they all cried, dancing about her and kissing her dimpled cheeks.

"Good news my dears—good news," she cried brightly, as she turned her beaming face towards them. "They want us down in that dull mortal world—oh dear, how damp and wet it was—I really don't know how they can ever feel happy. Come! Quickly my children, for soon it 'll be their Christmas Day—and we must be in time to make their earth pretty and bright." And then all the tiny creatures sprang into their sleighs, and clustered about the Queen.

"Now," she cried, waving her hands in the air, "Open your cloaks wide until I tell you to stay," and as they all obeyed a shower of tiny fairy snowflakes fluttered through the air, lightly touching the tree-tops and gliding backwards and forwards on the roofs of the houses, chasing each other in their glee, and romping roguishly together madly in the fresh, crisp air.

"Come," cried the Queen, pausing outside little Jack's bedroom window, "We must make this house very pretty and white. Do the garden nicely—and the window-sills," then all these busy, lovely little fairies smoothed out the shining snow-flakes on Jack's window-ledge, and sprinkled it evenly over his garden, making it look like a tiny snow-palace.

"Oh, just look! Have we not made it lovely?" cried the Queen, pausing and looking around the snow-clad garden and raising her fresh, pink face to the silent air. All seemed hushed and still, save for the music of the fluttering snow-petals as they tumbled all around, making the dull, brown earth beautiful to behold in its glistening cloak of pure, untrodden snow.

Just then, a joyous peal of bells chimed out their silvery song to the sleeping world, and all the tiny fairies paused and, clustering together, cried in tones of delight—

"Christmas—it's Christmas Day!" and, raising their wee faces to the dark evening sky, which was aglow with starlight, they smiled for joy.

"And we've just finished in time," cried the Queen in a low whisper. "Hark! Oh, hark to the glad music of the bells, as they shed their silver-toned blessing over the sleeping mortals. Come! We must now be off to our palace above. We've beautified their world for Christmas, and now we'll wish them a joyous Yuletide full of peace and gladness." And the next minute a hundred tiny, fluttering fingers twinkled in the air, as the sweet, beautiful little Snow-fairies breathed their tender greeting over the sleeping mortals.

CHAPTER IV.

Jack awoke early the next morning, and when he opened his sleepy, brown eyes, the first thing they alighted upon was a long, bulky-looking object, that dangled cheerily on the post at the

foot of his bed. Up he sprang, with eager outstretched hands, and making a dart for the merrily swinging stocking, he bounded into bed again, simply brimming over with delight.

Oh, the treasures that Santa Claus had packed so neatly in that dear little black stocking. Jack emptied out the contents with little exclamations of delight. Father Christmas had never, never been so generous to him before. Such a gem of a pencil-box, that seemed to open everywhere! Little wooden boats, a box of soldiers, and heaps of other wonderful treasures tumbled out cheerily, till at last, unable to believe that it was all really quite true, Jack rubbed his brown eyes very hard, then stared at the little heap of toys and sweets on the counterpane. Then, with a laugh of delight, our little friend sprang out of bed and pattered over to the window, to have a peep at the Christmas world outside. Oh wonder of wonders—was there ever such a glistening snow-clad world even in the most beautiful of fairy-books?

"Snow—real, white, lovely snow" cried Jack in tones of wildest delight, waving his hands in frantic glee to the white feathery flakes as they fluttered past him romping and dancing merrily in their play. On and on they galloped through the trees, over the house-tops, backwards and forwards through the gardens, faster and faster in their mad rushing frolic.

"Hurrah—Hurrah" he cried tapping the window-pane delightedly with his rosy finger tips. "Oh Muvver, Muvver, come and look," he sang out joyously, as Muvver came into the room looking sweet and lovely.

"Yes, Jack darling," she said in her low, gentle voice, while her blue eyes smiled in the most wonderful way as she raised him in her arms and pressed her warm, pink cheek to his. "It's a real old fashioned Christmas like they have in the story-books. See! The little snow-flakes did not forget us after all," she whispered with a happy smile as they watched the dancing little feathery things rush past them. Then they both laughed together for sheer joy and hugged each other ever so tight.

"We are going to have a lovely Christmas, dearie," she whispered. "It's all turned out like a story-book, for when you were in bed last night, the Postman brought a great hamper from Uncle Ned, who lives right far away over the sea," and Jack nearly sprang out of her arms as he gave a wild jump of delight. Then he stroked her yellow hair with his tiny brown fingers, and showed her all the lovely things Father Christmas had brought him. Oh, such a Christmas they had together—a real delightful one, and I firmly believe it was the work of those dear, wee, Snow-Fairies.

FATHER CHRISTMAS UP-TO-DATE.

HELP THE HOSPITAL

"DON'T let the children enjoy the Christmas season with absolutely no thought for the enjoyment of others less fortunate than themselves," is the advice of a mother of a large family.

"My boys and girls always spend the afternoon of Boxing Day mending and repairing old toys and making a scrap book of all their Christmas cards and the picture scraps off the Christmas crackers to take to our local hospital on New Year's Eve. By helping others to enjoyment, greater happiness for themselves is secured."

ABOUT THE CHRISTMAS TREE.

CHRISTMAS-TREES are grown extensively in Hampshire, Surrey, Sussex, and Yorkshire; they are also imported from Germany and Scandinavia. At Yuletide, 20,000 of them may arrive at Covent Garden on a single morning. Among these are the smallest and the largest of their kind, the trees for rich and poor—for the seller does not disdain the humblest buyer. The biggest trees are often purchased to form attractions—when decorated—for various places of entertainment, bazaars, and so forth.

SNAILS FOR THE CHRISTMAS DINNER

A MENU for a Christmas feast in the reign of Charles I. gives some strange dishes: "A soup of snails," "A powdered goose," "A dish of green fish buttered with eggs," "A hedgehog pudding," "A rabbit stuffed with oysters," "Polonian sausages," "A spinnage tart," "Eggs in moonshine." These appear among others, and were accompanied with cock-ale, surfeit-water, canary, sack, and Gascony wines.

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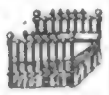

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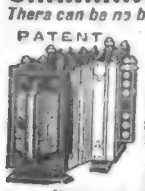

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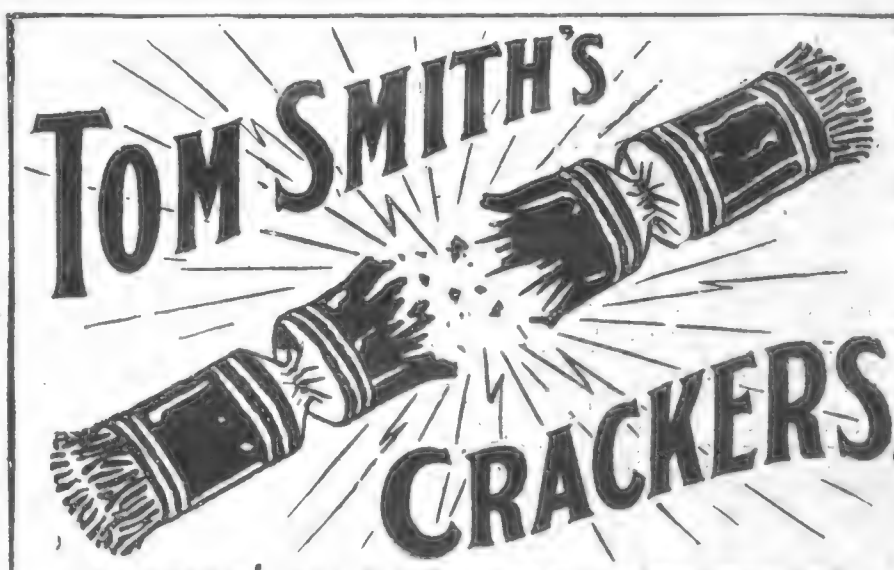

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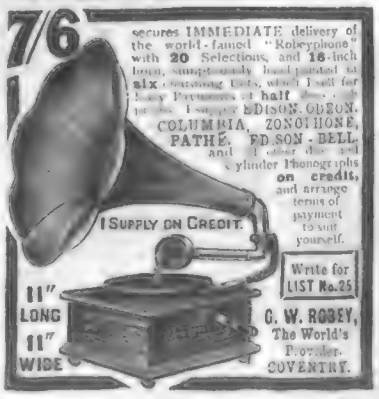

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11" LONG 11" WIDE

G. W. ROBEY, The World's Provider. COVENTRY.

THE WORLD OF WOMEN.

A Christmas Pudding; and what Became of It. . . .

A Story Without Words.

THERE are few indeed who have not a welcome for Christmas. To many of us, and let me hope to all of my readers, it means a happy and busy period of domestic preparation, shopping far and wide, exchange of good wishes, present-giving and receiving, the hanging of the mistletoe bough, the decoration of the holly, the eating of the Christmas turkey and plum-pudding, the dressing-up and stripping of the Christmas-tree, the anticipation of skating, a visit to the pantomime, dances, conjurers' entertainments, and all the other delights of a good old-fashioned Christmastide. Those who cannot look upon it as a season of merrymaking, yet find a subdued joy in it as the great religious festival, bringing with it a message of peace and goodwill towards men. Christmas morning always seems to dawn with a different atmosphere from other mornings, and if one were far removed from calendars or time-tables, the universal message of peace and goodwill would seem to vibrate upon the air, until it brought its own realisation with it. In the dominions upon which the sun never sets, far different are the Christmases which will be spent by many of the King's subjects, but whether in India, Canada, South Africa, Australia, or England, the toasts of "The King! God bless him," and "Absent Friends," will be responded to with equal heartiness. In whatever clime they may happen to find themselves at Christmastide, I am sure all readers of the *P.I.P.* will join in wishing each other a Happy Christmas and a Bright and Prosperous New Year, and I heartily echo their sentiments.

A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

It is high time to be busy about the good things for the table which shall weigh down the festive board. Christmas without mincemeat would, in the minds of many, hardly be Christmas. An excellent recipe is the following: 2 lb. each of currants, raisins, and apples, 2 lb. of candied orange and lemon peel, ¼ lb. of citron, 1 lb. of suet, 2 lb. of sugar, and ½ lb. of underdone beef. The juice of two lemons, a spoonful of mixed spice, a little grated nutmeg, and a half-pint of brandy. If liked, a glass of port may also be added. The apples should be peeled, cored, cut into quarters, and then minced finely; the raisins, after being stoned, should each be cut into small pieces, the currants cleaned, then slightly warmed. The beef-suet and candied peel require to be chopped very finely. Mix all ingredients together, adding the brandy and wine (if any) last. Clean glass or stone jars—empty jam-jars are excellent for the purpose—may now be filled with the mixture, and the tops covered with parchment-paper, such as is used for the tops of jam-jars. If the correct paper is not available, foreign writing-paper makes a good substitute. This mincemeat will keep quite a long time if carefully covered.

Recipe for Mincemeat.

Invitations to Christmas parties—more especially surprise invitations—do not always come as an unmixed joy. The important question is what to wear or not to wear. Once that problem is satisfactorily solved, one may give oneself up to the anticipations of enjoyment. The girl of limited dress allowance, however frequently finds it a hard puzzle when confronted by an old-fashioned dress. I have come to the conclusion that skirts will pass muster, bodices may be endured, but sleeves—sleeves really present a problem, and one, too, which actually impresses itself upon the masculine eye.

Surprise Parties.

Don't we all know how frightfully out-of-date even the smartest costume looks in a photo. of a few seasons ago? And it is all owing to the sleeves, which, since then, have somehow assumed such a quaint appearance. This being so, and as only the heroine of a novel can robe herself at a moment's notice in white muslin and a blue sash, or something black and clinging, it behoves the worried possessor of last season's gown to remodel it to the best of her ability. By directing attention to the sleeves, and taking them in hand, a marvellous transformation can be effected. From a leg-of-mutton sleeve the long cuff may be dispensed with, the material of the puff ripped loose, and a couple of inches, where the marks of the gathers show, cut off. The part of the sleeve retained may then be pressed over with an iron and cut up the seam. An epaulette or shoulder-frill is now obtained; outline the edges with braid or some other pretty trimming, add an undersleeve of silk and elbow-frills of lace. A variation might be obtained by an undersleeve of filet net, and a flounce of lace added to the shoulder-frill. Where the material available for a shoulder-frill is very short, a long, tight-fitting sleeve of tucked net makes a pretty renovation. Once the idea has been presented to my readers, I am sure that most of them are clever enough to invent pretty variations of these suggested renovations, which may possibly meet their particular case better.

How to Rise to the Occasion.

It is to be presumed that the Christmas hostess has nothing but the pleasure and welfare of her guests at heart, yet in how many cases does she act as if she aimed at the direct opposite, surely more from a want of thought and an absence of tact than anything else. Well, then, here are a few hints, which, if acted upon, ought to ensure a sense of harmony and the feeling of being appreciated among your visitors. To begin with, study to say the right thing, and let the right thing be the pleasant thing. Don't, when one of the party has been prevented and his relatives arrive making voluble excuses for his defection, attempt to reassure them by explaining it has all happened for the best, as, owing to rich Aunt Martha's unexpected arrival, you really could not have put him up. No; be satisfied that it is an ill wind that blows no! o ly any good, without laying stress on the fact. Again, a good hostess will not try to be the star of the occasion, or give the impression by her dress and behaviour that her guests are only invited to shine in reflected glory. Neither does it make for the success of the house-party for the hostess to surround herself with the young men of the party, who in duty bound must hover round her if she so desires, while the maidens are left neglected.

The Popular Christmas Hostess.

A very good plum-pudding is made as follows: take ¾ lb. of raisins, ¾ lb of currants, ¼ lb. of candied orange and lemon peel, 6 oz. of suet, 6 oz. of bread-crumbs, four eggs, and a tablespoonful of brandy. The ingredients are prepared as follows: The currants are cleaned and picked over, the raisins stoned and cut into halves, the candied-peel sliced finely. Both the suet and the bread-crumbs must be grated very fine. Beat up the eggs, and when all the other ingredients have been well mixed together, add the eggs, stir well, and add the brandy.

Recipe for Christmas Pudding.

The pudding is best mixed with a wooden spoon, and now is the time to carry round the basin in the old-fashioned way for each member of the household to have a stir. The pudding may be cooked in two ways: either boiled in a cloth or placed in a well-greased basin, tied up with a floured cloth, and steamed. At least five or six hours must be allowed for cooking; in fact, a pudding of this description can hardly be boiled too long. If it is desired to make several puddings, multiply the weight of the various ingredients three or four times, according to the number of puddings required. Christmas puddings may always be made and cooked in advance of the period for which they are required, as they can always be heated again by placing in a saucepan of boiling water and allowing to boil over again for a couple of hours.

The Family Stir.

The pudding may be dished up and brought to table in various ways. It may be placed on a paper doyley, sprinkled over with castor sugar and decorated with a sprig of holly, and sweet sauce or brandy sauce handed round separately. Or it may be placed on the dish, and a little brandy poured over it and set alight, so that when the pudding comes to table it is surrounded by a circle of pretty blue flames. This looks very pretty; but care must be taken to set alight only just before being carried into the room, as a burnt flavour is by no means an improvement. Another way is to pour the sweet sauce over the pudding and send it to table that way. When there are children in the family a charm is added to the pudding by the insertion of a threepenny-bit in its midst.

Ways of Serving up the Christmas Pudding.

SAMUDA'S SECOND GRAND LIMERICK

JUDGES: Mr. H. GREENHOUGH SMITH, *Editor "Strand Magazine."*
Mr. ARTHUR LAWRENCE, *Late Editor of the "Idler."*
Mr. MOSTYN T. PIGOTT, *of the "World."*

FIRST PRIZE

A FREEHOLD COUNTRY HOUSE, FURNISHED BY WARINGS, WITH PONY AND TRAP, AND £2 PER WEEK GUARANTEED FOR LIFE.

Second Prize, £50; Third, £25; Fourth, £10; Fifth, £5; Forty-Six Prizes of £1 1s.

ANOTHER GREAT PRIZE.

In response to the wish of a large number of Competitors in our first Limerick, we have decided to commence a second great Limerick Competition, under the same fair conditions as governed our last. We now offer as a first prize the most attractive reward ever offered for public competition. What is the ambition of most people? A freehold country house with an income to keep it up! That is our first prize! The winner of Samuda's second Limerick Competition will be the proud possessor of a pretty house in the country, every brick of which will be his own, and in addition a guaranteed income of £2 per week for life, which will enable him to live in it.

A HOUSE COMPLETE (Furnished by WARINGS).

By a house, Mr. Samuda does not mean a bare, empty house. It will be a pretty, well-kept country villa, standing in its own grounds. The interior will be decorated and artistically furnished throughout by Messrs. Waring—kitchen, hall, dining, drawing-room, and bedrooms, with everything conducive to home comfort. Table linen, crockery, household utensils, bed-linen, draperies—all are included. The house contains every modern improvement, including bath-room, hot and cold water, electric light, &c. All you have to do is to win the prize, and the house will be ready for you to live in it, complete in every particular. And not only that—in the grounds the winner will find stable and coach-house; inside the stable a smart little pony, and inside the coach-house a neat little trap with harness complete, just ready to drive himself or herself and friends about the surrounding country. As all this would be of little service without an income, Mr. Samuda completes this desirable prize with the addition of a comfortable income of £2 per week for life, the payment of which will be guaranteed by a well-known Insurance Company.

A PRIZE WORTH WINNING.

This is certainly a prize worth straining every nerve to win. Some people may be better off, but the winner would always be well-to-do, supplied with home comforts, everything to make life prosperous and happy. Should you be thinking of getting married, the difficulty of saving and waiting is at once removed. If you are a worker in a crowded town or city you can exchange your lot for ease and comfort in the country. If you are middle-aged and have earned a title to retirement by a lifetime of work, this prize means an easy evening of life in restful and peaceful surroundings, a nice country house, comfortable home, pony and trap to drive you about, and a regular weekly income, sufficient to support yourself and family for the rest of your life. Can anything be better or more complete? It should be remembered that the pension of £2 per week for life is a full £2 per week for necessities. A clear income, because you will be living rent free all the time.

THE OBJECT.

Mr. Samuda is the manufacturer of the well-known "AVOCA" Cigars, Cigarettes, &c., and for many years he has been determined to produce a high-grade quality non-injurious Virginia Cigarette at a popular price, to meet the requirements of the million. After extensive experiments, the "Traylee" Virginia Cigarettes were placed on the market, and the only difficulty was to find a method of quickly and inexpensively bringing them before the notice of the public. Mr. Samuda therefore decided to establish a Limerick Competition, feeling confident that every customer buying a sample hundred or so would in future be a regular smoker of the "Traylee" Cigarettes.

CONDITIONS.

The conditions are simple. Below we print a Limerick. All you have to do is to cut out the form and fill in the last line of the Limerick, sending same to us with your order for 100 "Traylee" Cigarettes, together with postal order for 2s. 6d. and 2d. for postage (2s. 8d. in all).

A FINAL WORD.

Most men smoke Cigarettes, and most men pay at least 2s. 6d. per 100, and as the "Traylee" Cigarette is certainly superior in quality to any other sold at this price, each Competitor gets full value for money, and his chance to win this huge prize or one of the 50 cash consolation prizes does not cost him a single penny. Every smoker, therefore, should try as a matter of course, for it costs him nothing. Those who do not smoke should also try, and give the cigarettes to some friend as a Christmas Gift.

THE JUDGES—Absolute Fairness Guaranteed.

As this is a special competition and not a weekly one, every attempt submitted will be classified by a competent staff, and the winning lines carefully selected by a committee of three well-known literary men having no connection with Messrs. Samuda's.

POINTS TO REMEMBER.

1. Every solution sent in will be carefully classified and judged entirely on its merits. As it is impossible to do this in the short space of one week, competitors are requested to send in their last lines at the earliest possible date.
2. The names of the prize-winners will be published in the *Westminster Gazette* on 10th January, 1908.
3. Cheques will be sent to prize-winners within a week of the result being made public.
4. The winner's weekly income will commence from the date the competition closes, and cheques will be posted on the first of each month afterwards. The title-deeds to the house will be immediately handed over to the prize-winner.
5. No member of the firm, employee, or friend of any member or employee, is eligible to compete.
6. Any number of last lines may be sent, but for each additional one a further 100 "Traylee" Cigarettes must be purchased, and the price thereof, including postage, 2s. 8d., included.
7. Competitors wishing to have the results specially posted to them must enclose an additional penny stamp when sending in their order.

.....CUT OUT THIS COUPON AND FILL UP CAREFULLY.....

ENTRY COUPON.

Address envelope—

The Limerick Committee,
c/o J. SAMUDA & CO.,
34, Leadenhall Street, London, E.C.

GENTLEMEN,—Kindly send post paid a box of 100 "Traylee" Virginia Cigarettes, for which I enclose P.O. 2s. 6d., and 2d. for postage.

If from any cause you do not execute this order, you are at liberty to return my money, and by so doing I entirely waive my right to be considered a competitor.

Full Name _____ (Please

Postal Address _____ write

Town _____ County _____ clearly.)

_____, 1907.

(X *Penny Illustrated Paper* 1.)

Here is an unfinished Limerick, to which the last line should be added—

There's a Cigarette commencing with "T,"
Its full name is Irish—"Traylee,"
It's Samuda's, the best,
Of fine leaf from the West

_____

I agree to accept the Committee's decision as final, and enter the Competition on that distinct understanding.

If more than one last line is sent, write same, with name and address, on a separate sheet of plain paper and pin to the entry form. Only one attempt must be written on each sheet, and for each last line sent in 100 "Traylee" Cigarettes must be purchased at 2s. 8d., including postage. Additional entry coupons will be sent on receipt of stamped addressed envelope.

F.E.P.

A Message to all Rheumatic Sufferers.

Electricity Offers a Cure.

Who does not know those grinding, unbearable pains of Rheumatism, Sciatica, or Lumbago? This common complaint knows no distinction of age, sex, or class. The cause of the trouble is still a matter of debate amongst medical men, and one of the first in which it was discovered that electricity has an astonishing and permanent effect. The names of medical men who have associated themselves with the electric treatment of the disease are a guarantee in themselves, and should induce all such sufferers to seek relief in the electric cure.

Dr. Mitchell Bruce is one of the greatest authorities on this disease. He says that the use of the continuous galvanic current in cases of Muscular Rheumatism occasionally dispels the pain and stiffness almost immediately.

Dr. Erb tells us, "the cure of Muscular Rheumatism certainly belongs to the most hopeful province of Electro Therapeutics."

Dr. Karl Nordhorst, of Wiesbaden, reports on seventy-one cases in which he tried electrical treatment, and out of which there was not one patient who did not derive considerable benefit from it, and only five who were not completely cured at the time of making the report.

"In chronic and sub-acute forms of joint trouble, whether rheumatic, rheumatoid, or gouty," writes Dr. W. S. Hedley, "and in muscular conditions having a similar origin, the usefulness of electrical treatment seems to lie (1st) in the power of removing inflammatory products by the quickening of the circulation and dilatation of the blood vessels that follow localised applications; (2nd) in the stimulant and alternative effect upon general nutrition of generalised electrical applications."

Dr. W. E. Steavenson gives in the "Lancet" particulars of sixty cases of Sciatica treated, of which thirty-seven were cured, eleven improved, one had a return and was cured a second time; two did not improve, and the remaining cases were uncertain at the time the report appeared. This gives a fair notion of the percentage of good to be had from electricity.

Dr. Bardet holds that Lumbago is the form of Rheumatism that is most susceptible to electric treatment, which he strongly advocates.

Speaking of Gout, Dr. Rockwell, in his work, "Medical and Surgical Uses of Electricity," says: "With some gouty patients the electrical treatment acts so decidedly that we are disposed to resort to it during the subsidence of each attack to relieve the pain and hasten recovery."

It can be seen that the electrical treatment of Rheumatism is not a new thing or an experiment. Its repeated and remarkable success proves it to be a certainty. The most convenient and effective means known for applying the current is the "Ajax" Dry-Cell Body Battery. This is an entirely new treatment, the battery being capable of generating a current of great volume continually, with no charging or preparation whatever. It will cure any case of Rheumatism that will yield to electricity.

"Electricity—The Road to Health" is the title of an eighty-page book telling all about Rheumatism and many other troubles, and pointing out a means by which they can be cured. It is full of good reading matter, and backed by many doctors' opinions. Any reader of "The Penny Illustrated Paper" can have it without one penny cost by writing direct to The British Electric Institute (Dept. 52), 25, Holborn Viaduct, London, E.C. It will be sent you at once in a plain, sealed envelope, and the advice of a specialist will be given you also.

EDITORIAL NOTICE.

The Editor is always glad to consider photographs of topical interest, but does not hold himself responsible for their safe keeping.

No photograph or manuscript will be returned unless accompanied by a stamped and addressed envelope.

All contributions should be addressed to—

THE EDITOR,

The Penny Illustrated Paper,

172, STRAND, LONDON, W.C.

THE WORLD OF PASTIME: SPORT OF THE WEEK.

FOOTBALL.

AT the Queen's Club next Tuesday the annual Rugby game between Oxford and Cambridge will be decided. On the run of the trial matches played by each 'Varsity team it looks as though Oxford will be returned the winners, for they are better all round, except that they have no player of such extraordinary personality as Kenneth MacLeod. This brilliant Cambridge three-quarter might win the game "off his own bat," and the moral influence of his presence may turn a prospective defeat into a victory for the Light Blues. The 'Varsity match is different altogether from the usual club event, as was exemplified a year or two back, when Oxford won, after all form was against their prospects.

Rugby football does not appear to be at a high grade at the present time. There are plenty of clubs, and the spirit which prevails among those who follow the "handling code" is as keen as ever; but the "class" is not up to the standard of recent years. Blackheath and Richmond are but shadows of their former selves, and last Saturday the "Heathens" went under to Oxford by 23 points to 5. The Light Blues had the better of the Old Merchant Taylors by no less than 31 points to 3, and the Harlequins vanquished London Irish by 31 points to nil. Richmond should have gone to Dublin to play the University, but at the last moment they scratched.

Manchester United met with a reverse at last, when they encountered Sheffield Wednesday at Owlerton on Saturday, but the Clayton club have such a commanding lead that the setback may not hurt them to any great degree. The United are now four points in front of their conquerors of last Saturday, who are, in turn, five points in front of their nearest rivals, Newcastle United. Bristol City have an equal record with the Novocastrians, though their goal average is slightly inferior.

WOOLWICH ARSENAL BEAT BLACKBURN ROVERS.
Some clever headwork.

WOOLWICH ARSENAL BEAT BLACKBURN ROVERS.
A good game ended in a victory for the Arsenal by two goals to nil.

One of the most interesting matches in the League tourney was that between Woolwich Arsenal and Blackburn Rovers: but a couple of regretable accidents marred its complete success. Towards the close of the first half, Cowell, the Rovers back, badly strained the muscles of his right thigh, and Wilson, the centre half, also had to retire, whilst before ends were changed a goal was scored. This came from the foot of Satterthwaite, the Arsenal having the lead of one goal on crossing over.

In the second half the Plumstead team scored soon after the restart through Sands, and as they failed to notch a point, the Rovers were backmarked. The Lancashire club took the field with a re-arranged team against Chelsea on Monday, but they met with no better luck, being beaten by one goal to nil. The result was favourable to Chelsea's prospects in no small degree, for it enabled them to pass both Sunderland and Birmingham in the League table.

However, Chelsea came a very bad cropper against Notts County on the previous Saturday, the lace county beating them by two goals to nil. Six goals were scored in the match between Aston Villa and Newcastle United, at Aston, the result being a draw, each side scoring thrice. Bristol City were three goals too good, for Nottingham Forest, who failed to score, and Preston North End drew with Middlesbrough at one goal each, whilst Sunderland were beaten by Bolton Wanderers by two goals to one. Bury v. Liverpool, Manchester City v. Sheffield United, and Everton v. Birmingham were postponed, owing to the fog.

Fulham gave further evidence of their quality by defeating Glossop by six goals to one at Craven Cottage, in the Second Division. Of course, the original intention of those interested in the club, when

KING ALFONSO AS A HUNTSMAN.
His Majesty "snapped" at the conclusion of a run with the Cheshire Foxhounds, which he attended during his stay with the Duke and Duchess of Westminster at Eaton Hall last week

TOMMY BURNS,

Of Canada, who defeated Gunner Moir at the National Sporting Club on Monday night.

STEEPLECHASING AT KEMPTON PARK.

Over the sixth hurdle in the Sunbury Maiden Hurdle Race.

GUNNER MOIR,

Who was knocked out in the tenth round of his fight with Burns.

they broke away from the Southern League, was a place in the First Division of the premier body, and on the form they have been showing lately they have a very good chance of achieving that ambition. Clapton Orient also did very well by beating Grimsby Town by two goals to one.

In the Southern League, Brentford went under to the Crystal Palace, who beat them by two goals to one. Swindon showed good form against Bristol Rovers, the margin in favour of the Wiltshire club being four goals to one. Southampton had the better of Northampton by two goals to nil, but Plymouth Argyle had some difficulty in beating Norwich City by a solitary goal. Seven goals were scored in the match between Portsmouth and New Brompton, the former club accounting for five of them. Luton scored a good win over Millwall, the margin in favour of the straw-plaiting town club being three goals to one. Tottenham Hotspur just got the better of Leyton by one goal to nil, Queen's Park Rangers had a similar advantage over Reading, and Brighton and Hove drew with Bradford Park Avenue, each scoring once. West Ham United beat Watford by two goals to nil, and it is worthy of note that no home team was defeated.

BOXING

The much-talked-of boxing-match between Tommy Burns, of Canada, and Gunner Moir, of England, was brought to an issue at the National Sporting Club on Monday night. To the disappointment of everybody who looked upon the Gunner as being well-nigh invincible, he was little more than a "chopping-block" for the Canadian, who was too quick on his feet to allow Moir to get in a blow of any power. Burns won in the tenth round, and thus retained the championship of the world.

ATHLETICS AND CYCLING.

Until Christmas is past, there will be very little to say about athletics or cycling, for men and clubs will take matters easily, and there will not be much of interest in either athletics or cycling for the time being. However, in the new year matters will liven up, clubs will begin to get their players into trim for the championships, and it is hoped that the little "rift in the lute" between the A.A.A. and the N.C.U. will have been adjusted, and that the friendly relations which have always obtained between the two bodies will be maintained.

According to the strict rules of the A.A.A., professionalism must be entirely barred, but the N.C.U. have for some time past sanctioned professional races under their own rules. But those rules do not apply to the meetings whose permits are sanctioned by the governing body of athletics. The thin end of the wedge is one of the most subtle of weapons when skilfully used, and there is no reason to doubt that if the A.A.A. did not show firmness in the matter they would cease to hold the confidence of the clubs in their membership. However, the cycling section have decided to hold a conference with the athletic body, and there is every reason to hope for a satisfactory solution of the difficulty.

Oxford University Hare and Hounds had a match with the Blackheath Harriers at Oxford on Saturday, two teams from each club competing. In the first-team race, Oxford won by 23 points to 32, and the "heathens" were also defeated by the Dark Blues in the second-team struggle. In the senior race G. S. Butler (New College), finished first, with E. F. Judson (Blackheath) as his nearest attendant. The time of the Oxonian was 44 min. 11 sec., not at all bad for the trying course. In the second-team race F. C. Davis (Blackheath) was first man home.

The Cambridge University second string met the Ranelagh Harriers' reserves over the University course, and won by 15 points to 40. The first man to finish was W. A. Cooper, who won with great ease. The first man of the visiting team to pass the judges was J. Dewar, but he was nearly three minutes behind the winner, and only finished seventh.

CHRISTMAS FAIRYLAND.

FORTUNATELY, the fire at Gamage's last week did not reach the Christmas Bazaar, at the opening function of which we had the opportunity of inspecting all the good things that Father Gamage has gathered together to be distributed for him by Father Christmas in a few days now. The great centre of attraction is the large set-piece, showing, by well-made models, all sorts of up-to-date transport by trains—electric, steam, overhead, and underground; while the fine assortment of other working models will appeal very strongly to many of our great engineers-to-be. One cannot do better than send for their nicely-illustrated catalogue, giving pictures and prices of the thousand-and-one articles suitable for Christmas Presents.

LACROSSE: SURREY v. MIDDLESEX.

Surrey tries to get possession.

LACROSSE: SURREY v. MIDDLESEX.

Surrey forwards press round their opponents' goal.

HAVE YOU ANY SKIN ILLNESS?

Everyone wishes to have a skin free from spot, blemish, or the slightest disfigurement; but many people fail to achieve this. Our readers cannot have failed to notice the fact that even a single pimple on the face will make it look unpleasant, and hence it is that everyone who takes a pride in their looks is anxious to remove skin blemishes. It is, of course, a bad blunder to make a surface cure and drive the trouble inward, but if the right treatment is adopted there will be no danger of this. The trouble will be soon removed, and the former sufferer will have a clear, pure, and healthy skin again.

There is no expense, and very little trouble involved in having a healthy skin instead of one disfigured by spots or blemishes. If you continue to have the latter, it is because you are unwilling to adopt the "Antexema" treatment, which is very simple, but at the same time marvellously successful, and is as good for such serious trouble as eczema, psoriasis, and nettle-rash, as for pimples, blotches, blackheads,

For Eczema of the Back, and all Skin Troubles, nothing equals "Antexema."

chafed, red, rough, or irritated skin, and other minor forms of skin trouble. It is extraordinary that anyone should go about feeling uncomfortable or looking unsightly when "Antexema" will completely clear the skin of that which disfigures it.

FORMS OF SKIN ILLNESS.

Anyone looking through our family handbook on "Skin Troubles," a copy of which is offered to our readers at the foot of this article, will find information on the following skin troubles: Acne, Babies' Skin Troubles, Bad Complexions, Barbers' Rash, Blackheads, Boils, Blotches, Burns and Scalds, Corns and Bunions, Chaps, Chilblains, Easily-Chapped Skin; Skin Troubles affecting the Ears, Eyes, Feet, Hands, and Scalp; Eczema (chronic and acute), Eczema of the Legs, Facial Blemishes, Gouty Eczema, Leg Wounds, Lip and Chin Troubles, Nettlerash, Pimples, Prickly Heat, Psoriasis, Ringworm, Scabies, Scrofula, Shingles, and Ulcers.

Immediately your skin looks red, rough, coarse, has breakings-out or pimples upon it, or its health is affected in any way, give the matter instant attention. Don't imagine you will get over your trouble by letting things take their course. It is because it is fancied that slight skin ailments will cure themselves that you see so many people with bad complexions or disfigured with breakings-out of some kind.

IMPRESS THIS FACT ON YOUR MIND.

"Antexema" cures every form of skin trouble, however serious, and is the very thing for every-day troubles, such as chafed or irritated skin, cuts, burns, and bruises. That is why "Antexema" has become a household remedy. The way in which it cures is easily explained. It is invisible when applied and forms a temporary cuticle over the affected part, under which a new and healthy skin can grow. One very strong point in favour of "Antexema" is that the moment it is applied all irritation stops.

OUR SPECIAL OFFER TO INDUCE YOU TO TRY "ANTEXEMA."

"Antexema" is supplied by all Chemists at 1s. 1½d. and 2s. 9d., or direct, post free, in plain wrapper, for 1s. 3d. or 2s. 9d., and is easily obtainable from the leading chemists in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, South Africa, India, and all British Dominions. But to enable you to try "Antexema" we will send you a free sample of "Antexema" and "Antexema Granules," together with our family handbook on "Skin Troubles." To obtain the sample fill in the coupon at foot and send three penny stamps for a copy of our little book, and address your letter to The Antexema Company, 83, Castle Road, London, N.W.

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P.I.P.

P.I.P. PLAYGOER. By THE PROMPTER.

HOW Mr. Bernard Shaw does love his little jokes, to be sure! And how some of his little jokes do bore us to extinction sometimes! In "Cæsar and Cleopatra," now being performed at the Savoy Theatre, G. B. S., one of whose chief delights is to compare himself with Shakspere, gives us a "masterpiece," the treatment of the theme of which bears about as much resemblance to Shakspere as does a heathen Chinee to the German Emperor. Still, it must be said that Mr. Shaw describes "Cæsar and Cleopatra" as a history. So far so good, for it certainly is not a play. True, a series of dramatic incidents are put before us, but in the arrangement of these events, there is not the slightest dramatic sequence, and finally one leaves the theatre, to a certain extent grateful to Mr. Shaw for having given us flashes of his best work; but, withal, disappointed at his latest "little joke."

* * *

But it is good to have our leading romantic actor, Mr. Forbes Robertson, back in London with us again. His musical voice, his quiet, dignified, convincing personality, and his air of forceful restraint cannot fail to endear him to every lover of the theatre, and one would wish that he had made his re-appearance in a play more likely to appeal to his hundreds of thousands of admirers than is "Cæsar and Cleopatra." Miss Gertrude Elliott, as Cleopatra, has a part which, to be quite frank, is a little beyond her powers; but in the third act she is quite excellent, though failing somewhat earlier in the evening. As Cæsar's secretary, Mr. Ian Robertson gives a delightful little study. Is the play a success? Well, "betwixt and between," I should say.

* * *

I hear that, early next year, Mr Martin Harvey will probably produce "The World and His Wife," the English rights of which he has secured from Mr. William Faversham.

* * *

"Miss Hook of Holland" who, some days ago, scored her three hundredth "run" is still going as strong as when she first made her bow to the public, and the box-office cry, hale and hearty, is "Still they come." And if I am not very much mistaken "Miss Hook of Holland" will continue to draw all London for months and months to come. I looked in at the Prince of Wales's Theatre on the occasion of the three hundredth performance and found all our old friends looking particularly well and extraordinarily juvenile after such a long innings. Mr. G. P. Huntley is funnier than ever as the eccentric Mr. Hook; Miss Isabel Jay continues to sing like an angel; Miss Gracie Leigh, a wonderfully clever actress this, as the maid who wears many petticoats and is not averse to showing them, plays with delightful freshness, while Mr. George Barrett as Simon Slinks would assuredly make a cat laugh. Recently, of course, you know, Mr. Maurice Farkoa has joined the cast and he imbues the part of the bandmaster with that peculiar charm which is all his own. Good luck, Miss Hook, you deserve your success, as you are quite one of the most charming musical comedies to be found in many a long day's march.

* * *

I hear that "Cæsar Borgia," the new four-act play especially written for Mr. H. B. Irving by Mr. Justin Huntly McCarthy, and recently produced at Edinburgh, is a great success. Also, it seems, Mr. Irving and his wife, Miss Dorothea Baird, have achieved great personal triumphs, so that, perhaps, before long, we may have to welcome Mr. Irving back to London once again.

* * *

Mr. George Edwardes is at present in Vienna, whither he has wended his way in search of new plays. This, of course, does not mean that "The Merry Widow" is in need of a successor, as Daly's is still doing about the best business in London. "The Gay Gordons" too, is packed nightly and, altogether, "Musical Comedy Land" is very flourishing just now.

* * *

Preparations for the coming Lyceum pantomime, "Robinson Crusoe" proceed apace, and if all I hear about this production be true the management have got an assured success. The following are the principals in the cast—

Robinson Crusoe	Miss Dorothy Craske
Polly Hopkins	Miss Sybil Arundale
Capt. Lanyard	Miss May Yetman
Nala	Mlle. Espinosa
Will Atkins	Mr. John E. Coyle
Mrs. Crusoe	Mr. George Brooks
Guzzling Jack	Mr. Ben Brown
Little Billie	Mr. George Le Clerq
Friday	Mr. Ed. Espinosa

* * *

I hear that Miss Marie Dressler will shortly go into management of her own—she has a musical comedy ready—as soon as her contract with Mr. Alfred Butt terminates at the Palace Theatre. Miss Dressler, in America, has had considerable experience in musical comedy and she tells me that in her new piece she will play the part of a mother with several children.

* *

Mr. Jerrard Grant Allen will produce "The Stormy Petrel" at some matinées at a West End theatre shortly. Mr. Jerrold Robertshaw will play the lead and, as already announced, the play has undergone considerable alterations since it was first produced at Glasgow, and afterwards played at The Kursaal, Bexhill.

* * *

The famous Yacht scene in "Brewster's Millions," as presented by Charles Frohman at the Hicks Theatre during the eight months the piece has been running, has created some considerable sensation, and there is reason to believe that during the coming pantomime season there will be many attempts to imitate the realistic third act of "Brewster's Millions," either in part or in its entirety. It is understood that at least one London pantomime will pay the Hicks Theatre the compliment of reproducing this act as nearly as possible, and there are many propositions of a similar nature in connection with pantomimes in Provincial England.

Photo. Dover St. Studios.

THE RECENT COMMAND PERFORMANCE OF "STILL WATERS RUN DEEP," AT WINDSOR CASTLE.

Sir Charles Wyndham as Mr. John Mildmay; Miss Marion Terry as Mrs. Sternhold; and Mr. Alfred Bishop as Mr. Potter.

BE KIND TO THE UGLY DUCKLING.

A really successful Christmas hostess should have a hint of the match-maker about. Then the girls who respond to her invitation will bring along their prettiest blouses, their best songs, and their brightest smiles, and the men will be only too glad to muster to her call, for she will have the reputation of always being surrounded by the nicest girls. Yet, if among all the smart, gay throng there should be a shy young fellow without a word to say for himself, or a little country mouse, painfully conscious of her dowdy frock, these are just the ones for the hostess to take under her especial wing, unless there is a possibility of introducing them to each other.

A CHRISTMAS GIFT OF HOME MANUFACTURE.

Girls with clever fingers delight in giving presents of their own making, and often contrive very pretty and intricate gifts which must have necessitated a good deal of time and ingenuity in manufacture. Here, however, is a very simple suggestion for a pretty home-made gift, which may be carried out by less experienced workers. To fashion a dainty workbag or handbag, all that is required is a half yard of brocade, tapestry, chiné silk, broché silk, or velvet. This for the outside of the bag. Then for the lining, half a yard of thin silk, such as China, Pongée, Japanese, or British washing-silk, is best for the purpose. Seam up each half yard of silk on three sides, so that you have really two bags, slip one within the other, so that the raw edges of each are hidden, make a deep hem, and run a draw-string round the top, and there is your dainty hand-bag complete. Instead of tying the ribbon draw-string into a bow one side, the two ends may be neatly joined together, and a corresponding opening made on the other side. The bag will then draw up very conveniently from each side.

OLD BUT EVER NEW.

To Britishers of to-day, young or old, at home or abroad, there is no more familiar every-day name than "Mother Seigel's Syrup." It will doubtless interest many of our readers to learn that this standard medicine is also now sold in new form, as tablets, under the name of "Mother Seigel's Syrup Tablets." Their medicinal qualities and action are said to be precisely those of the Syrup, and they should prove very convenient and desirable to people when travelling or when away from home in the ordinary course of business. They are put up in neat and handy packages, suitable for the waistcoat pocket or a lady's hand-satchel.

SAMUDA'S SECOND LIMERICK.

So popular has the Limerick become that Samuda's are now running a second grand competition, with a still more attractive first prize. It includes a house in the country, completely furnished by Waring, with bath, hot and cold water and electric light; a pony and trap, with stabling, and £2 a-week for life with which to keep the establishment up. Apart from this handsome prize, there is a second prize of £50, and numerous cash consolation prizes. As a means of quickly popularising a new cigarette and judging from the number of people who must be smoking Traylees after writing Samuda's last line, they have undoubtedly hit on a happy advertising idea.

NOTICE.—*In future all Editorial Communications for the "P. I. P." must be addressed to 172, Strand, London, W.C.*

JOLLY JACK COMES HOME FOR CHRISTMAS.

CURE YOURSELF OF

RHEUMATISM

I Will Tell You How And Send You the Remedy FREE

My combination treatment cures, not merely relieves but actually cures, cases of **Rheumatism, Gout and Sciatica.** This is not fiction, but a pure statement of fact, as many thousands of people will testify.

The *Sunday Circle*, in a recent issue, published the following:—

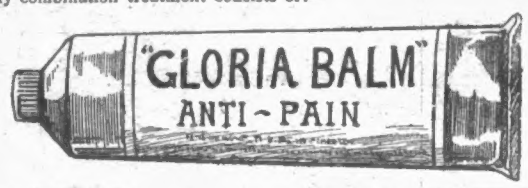
A RELIABLE TONIC.

"It is very necessary nowadays to know whether cures advertised are harmless and genuine. There is no room for doubt on these points in regard to the **Gloria Tonic** for Rheumatism, Sciatica, etc. In a recent number of *Health*, it was stated that the **Gloria Tonic** had been tested and was found to contain no ingredients harmful in the action. It was also found to be a specific of great value that has effected a very great number of remarkable cures."

This, of course, speaks for itself.

The numerous **so-called** remedies offered to the public, through the medium of the newspapers, have absolutely killed all confidence; therefore, in order to make my genuine remedy more generally known, **I have decided to give away a large quantity** so that everybody can test for themselves the truth of my statements.

My combination treatment consists of:—

1 

GLORIA BALM
Which Instantly Relieves Pain.

GLORIA PILLS
Which Purify the Blood and Invigorate the Whole System.

2

3

GLORIA TONIC TABLETS
Which Effect a Complete and Permanent Cure.

It must be quite palpable to every thinking man and woman that no one medicine can perform the functions of these three. **Some** liniments may relieve the pain temporarily, but they do **not cure.** Likewise, there are internal remedies which alleviate the disease, after some time has elapsed, but the agony is more acute whilst the medicine is operating. With my treatment pain is lulled **immediately** it makes itself evident, and consequently there is no need for you to suffer whilst the cure is being effected. Having been cured myself when I was practically in a hopeless condition; pronounced incurable by several doctors; and after spending a fortune upon all sorts of useless remedies, I speak from personal and never-to-be-forgotten experience and with feelings of gratitude to the merciful providence which put me in the way of obtaining the recipes for these **three truly wonderful medicines.**

I earnestly ask every Rheumatic Sufferer to obtain a free supply of this medicine at once. Simply fill in the coupon printed with this advertisement, cut it out and paste it on a post-card, or enclose it in an envelope (unsealed it will come for a halfpenny) and post to me, and a supply will reach you in less than 24 hours. Address:—

Cut Here.
Coupon. JOHN A. SMITH, Bangor House, Shoe Lane, London, E.C.

Please send me a Free Supply of your Medicine.

Name.....

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JOHN A. SMITH, 160, Bangor House, Shoe Lane, London, E.C.

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Stories from Santa Claus

EDMUND POLLOCK

His Problem.

"Are you good at arithmetic, my dear?" asked Mr. Jones of his wife.

"I was accounted the very best arithmetician at school," replied Mrs. Jones, with a touch of pride in her voice.

"I have a problem for you."

"State it."

"How can I buy £10 worth of Christmas presents with £3 in cash and no credit?"

A Treat for Them.

It was the custom of a Sunday School drum-and-fife band on Christmas Eve to sally forth and sing carols at the houses of various members of the congregation. They were generally well received, and in addition to donations of money were often treated to refreshments.

There was one crusty old gentleman whom they were rather uncertain about visiting as they were doubtful as to what kind of reception he would give them. They decided to risk it, however, and forming up under his bedroom window struck up a well-known carol. In a few minutes the window was opened and the old gentleman's night-capped head appeared.

"How many are there of you?" he asked.

"Twenty," was the response.

"Very well," he said, throwing a large jugful of water over them. "Divide that amongst you."

As He Found It.

Jackson: "What's the shortest day in the year?"

Smith: "I don't know what it is by the calendar, but it's Christmas by my financial account?"

Failed to Act.

Dollie: "They say if you hang a wish-bone over the door on Christmas Day you will marry the first man who walks under it."

Phyllis: "That's all nonsense. I tried it once, and the first man who came through the door was as poor as a church-mouse."

No Christmas Present.

Stranger: "Sir, do you remember giving a poor, friendless tramp sixpence one cold Christmas Eve?"

Householder: "I do!"

"Sir, I am that tramp; that coin was the turning point in my career; with it I got a shave, a meal, and work. I saved my money, went to Australia, made a fortune, and last week I came back to London to share my wealth with you. But, unfortunately, I struck the Stock Exchange before I struck you—and—have you another sixpence that you could conveniently spare, Sir?"

Didn't Know What He Missed.

A gentleman, having recently moved into the district, had had no experience of that scourge known as the town's brass band.

Consequently, when a few days before Christmas a man called upon him and informed him that the band would play "a selection of carols in front of selected houses." Mr. X. had no objection to his name being added to the list.

If Mr. X was surprised when the band didn't turn up, he was simply astounded when, on Boxing Day, his visitor called again for "that little donation."

"But," protested the gentleman, "your band did not play in front of my house."

It was the visitor's turn to be surprised.

"My dear Sir," he gasped. "If our band had—er—troubled you, do you think I should have had the impudence to call on you this morning? Your name was on the list, consequently you—er—escaped. Perhaps, Sir, being somewhat of a stranger, you don't know our band? Ah!"—sadly—"in that case, Sir, you'll never know what you've missed!"

—*Weekly News.*

What He had Noticed.

"Now there is one peculiar fact about women and Christmas," said the thoughtful man.

"What is that?" asked his friend. "Do they buy more than——"

"No, no. It is this. You will find so many women have seen more Christmases than they have birthdays."

His Present.

"Let me offer you myself as a Christmas present, dear," said young Mr. Brokely to her.

"I can only accept useful Christmas gifts, thank you, Mr. Brokely," replied the maiden.

Doing Good by Stealth.

It wanted but a few days to Christmas, yet it was evident to the household that the head of the family had arrived home in a rather bad temper.

"What is the matter, John?" inquired his wife.

"Matter—why, you know how I detest charity subscriptions. To think that at my age, and with my experience, I should be let in for two guineas to support some wretched charity is more than I can stand. Pass the newspaper.

"Last week a tout of one of these societies called, and left two tickets at the office for a charity concert to be given in the neighbourhood. It made me wild, for the man knew perfectly well that I had a conscientious objection to such tomfoolery. I have always said that I have worked for every penny of my money, and expect other people to do the same. Where are my slippers?

"Everyone knows that I look upon charity concerts as frauds. It never occurred to me that anyone was ignorant of the fact, not even that young typist that I employed a day or two back. So, without a thought, I rang for him, handed him the tickets, and said:

"'Here, take these. You know what to do with them?'

"'Yes, sir,' he said; 'I know. Thank you.'

"At first I thought 'Intelligent boy that,' but I did not see what he had to thank me for, anyway.

"Now, yesterday, the secretary of that charity organisation called upon me, and asked me for two guineas for those tickets.

"'What?' I said. 'Two guineas? I didn't use the tickets. Whoever supposed I should? I sent them back to you, by return. What do you mean?'

"'The tickets were used,' he replied; 'here they are, and the counterfoils.'

"'But I did return them. Where is young Filer. He will soon put you right.'

"And I rang for the typist.

"'Filer,' I said, 'didn't I give you two charity concert tickets to return to the society?'

"'No, Sir,' answered the young idiot. 'You gave me the tickets, and said I knew what to do with them.'

"'And what on earth did you do with them?' I asked.

"'I went to the concert, of course; I thought you meant to be—er—generous.'

—*Chums.*

Repaid.

A Christmas dance was being held in the village school-room. The men were mostly farm-hands, with one or two local tradesmen. The belle of the evening was the teacher of the infant class.

During the evening a simple-looking youth was introduced to the teacher, and asked if he might have a dance with her.

The latter drew herself up haughtily and said—

"No, Sir, I am particular with whom I dance."

Whereupon the man replied, with an air of indifference—

"I am not, or I would never have asked you."

Surprised Her.

"So glad you finally managed to visit us," said Mrs. de Style. "First of all, come into the picture gallery; I want to show you my old masters——"

"My goodness!" exclaimed Mrs. Plane. "I didn't know you were ever in service."

By Deputy.

At a village church a wedding was fixed for Christmas morning. The happy morn arrived, and in due course a youthful swain and a buxom damsel presented themselves at the chancel steps.

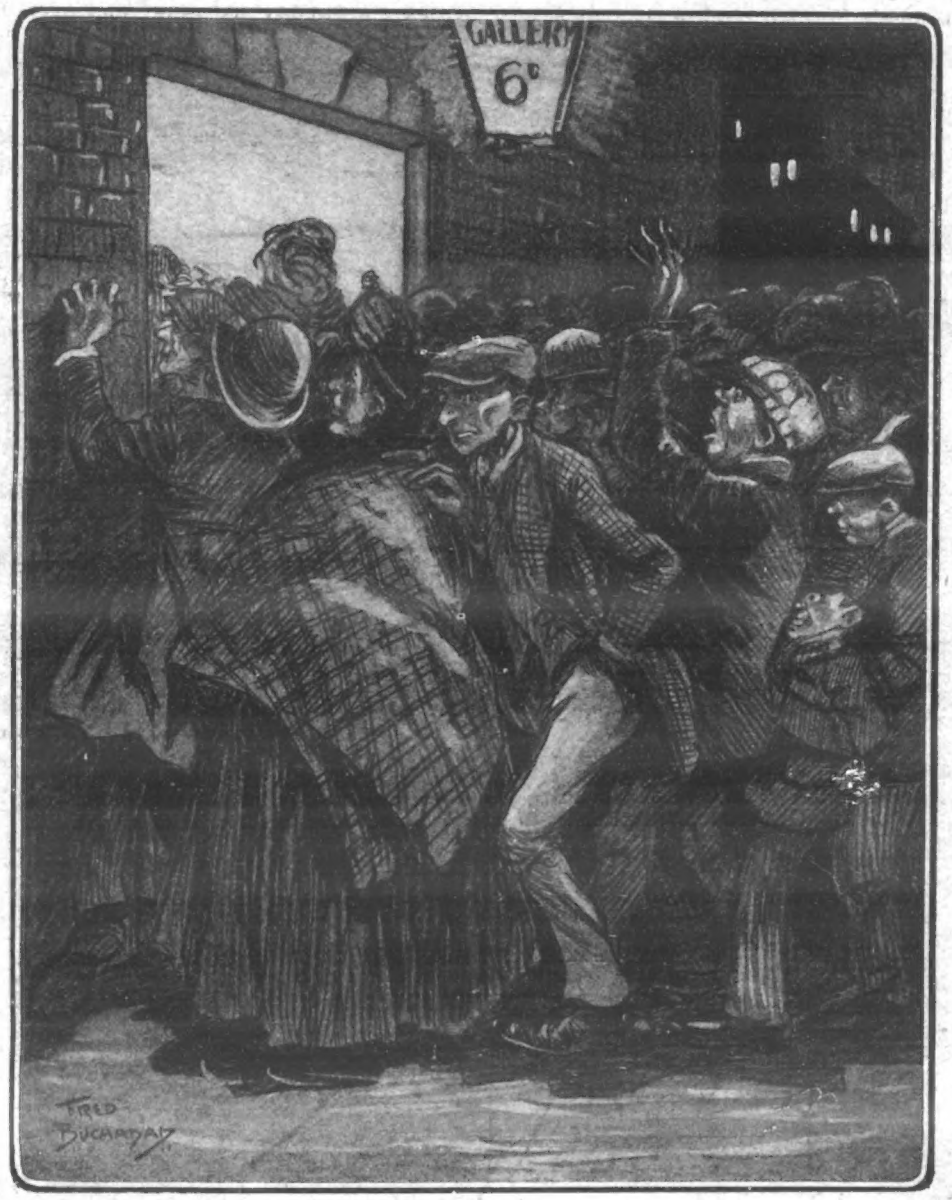
The service proceeded smoothly as far as the question, "Wilt thou have this woman to be thy wedded wife?" upon which the supposed bridegroom, instead of responding, stammered blushingly:

"Please, Sir, I'm not the right man! I don't want to get married!"

"Not the right man!" exclaimed the clergyman, aghast. "Then where is the right man?"

"He's down at the bottom of the church, Sir. He's too shy to come up."

NOT LOST BUT GONE BEFORE.



EXCITED COSTER to pal in front): I can't come in, Bill, I've swallered me tanner!

As Usual.

She stands upon the ladder tall,
Her Christmas wreath all ready.
She holds the nail against the wall,
Prepared to hit it steady.

But hark! what means that fearful wail?
Its anguish would affright one;
It simply means she hit a nail,
But it was not the right one.

—*Cassell's Saturday Journal.*

Which was It?

"No," said the young man; "I'm not sure whether my wife's Christmas gift to me was meant to please me or humble my pride."

"What did she give you?" asked his hearers.

"She had a crayon portrait of me done by an amateur artist."

Her Views.

"Here, my dear," said the husband, producing his purse, "here is £10 I won playing cards over at Brown's last night. You may have it to buy that dress you wanted."

Reluctantly the conscientious wife took the money, then said, with an expression of rigid rectitude:—

"I simply shudder at the thought of using money gained in such a way. Henry, promise me that after you have won enough for me to buy the hat to go with the dress you will never again touch those awful cards. I don't want my husband to become a gambler."

Awkwardly Put.

Dr. M—— was sitting by the side of a rather deaf maiden lady at a dinner, when the latter, in a simpering manner, remarked:

"Ought I to call you Dr. M—— or Mr. M——?"

The medico is rather irascible, so he replied:

"Call me what you like, Madam. Some of my friends call me an old fool."

The lady, imperfectly hearing, innocently rejoined:

"Ah! but those are only people who know you intimately!"

His Line.

A pompous manufacturer of machinery was showing a stranger over his factory.

"Fine piece of work, isn't it?" he said, as they were looking at a very ingenious machine.

"Yes," said the visitor, "but you cannot hold a candle to the goods we are turning out."

"Indeed!" said the chagrined manufacturer, "and what is your line?"

"Gunpowder," was the reply.

His Opinion.

A gentleman went into a hat shop to have his silk hat ironed. While he stood there alone and bareheaded, another man rushed in with his hat in his hand, and, supposing the first customer to be an attendant, angrily confronted him.

"See here," he said, "this hat doesn't fit."

The bareheaded one eyed the stranger critically from head to foot, and then drawled out:

"Well, neither does your coat. What's more, if you'll pardon my saying so, I can't say I quite like the colour of your trousers."

FRENCH MILITARY BALLOON BLOWN AWAY IN A GALE.

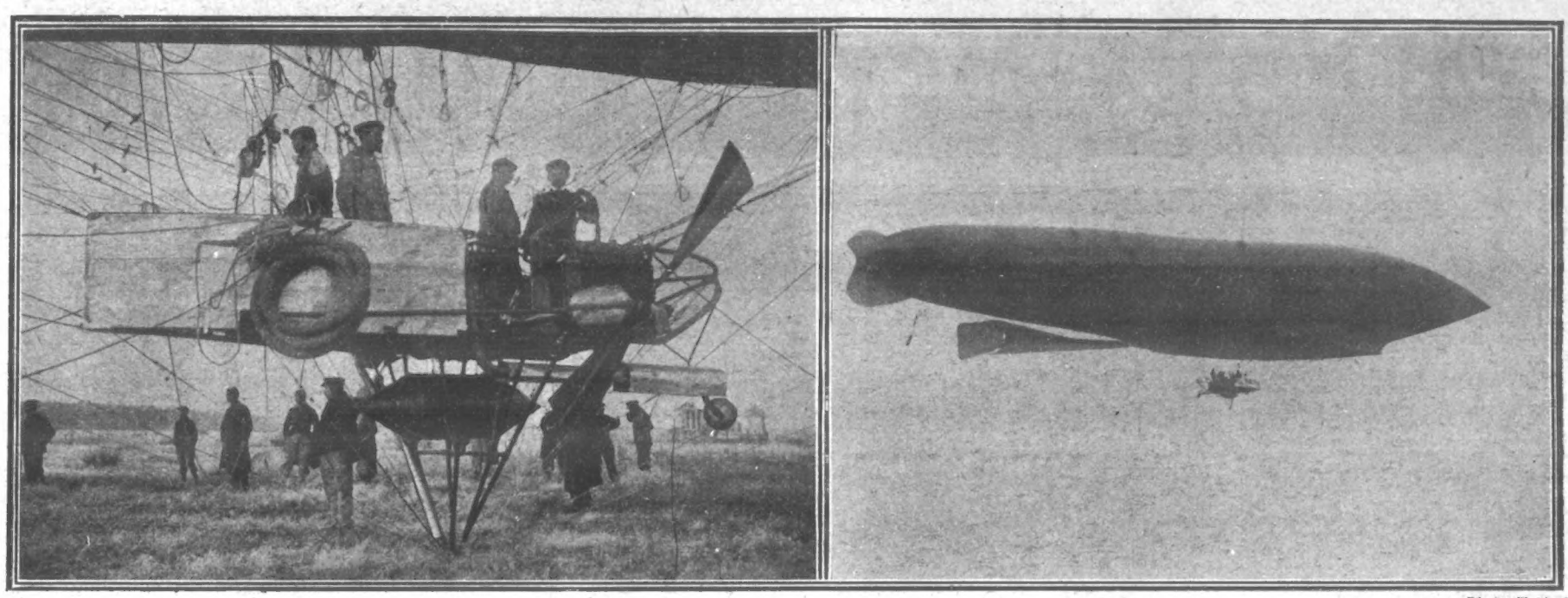


Photo. Topical.

During a heavy gale on Saturday evening, the famous French military airship "La Patrie" was wrenched from her moorings near Verdun. Apparently she drifted across the Channel and went north, for an airship was seen over Wales on Sunday morning, and over Larne, in the North of Ireland, at four in the afternoon. Our photographs show part of the crew of the famous airship, and "La Patrie" in flight.

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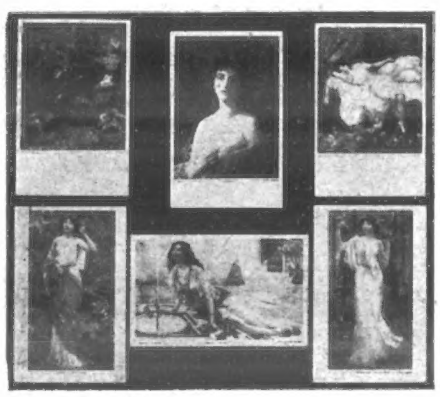

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